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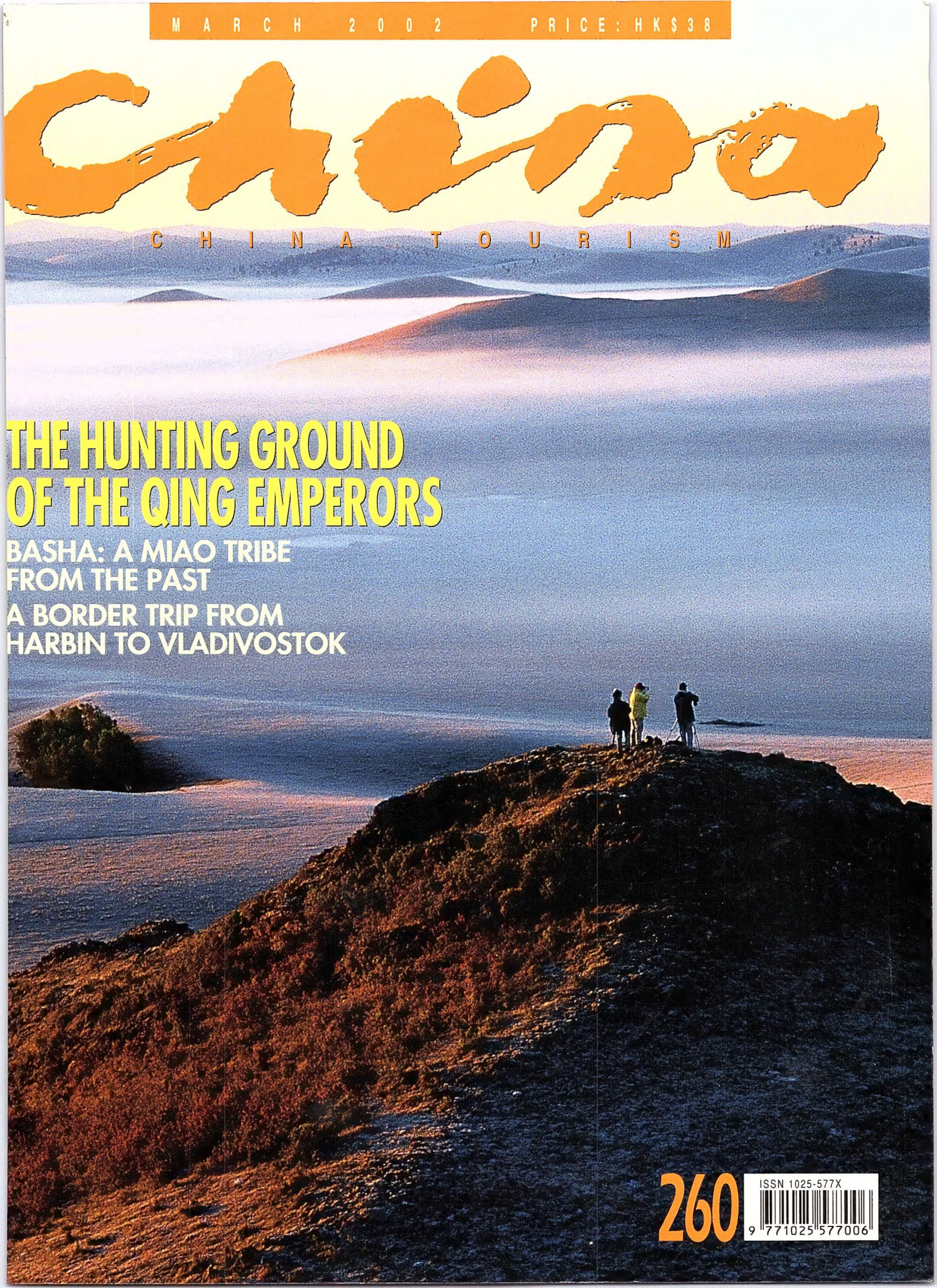

THE HUNTING GROUND OF THE QING EMPERORS

BASHA: A MIAO TRIBE FROM THE PAST

A BORDER TRIP FROM HARBIN TO VLADIVOSTOK

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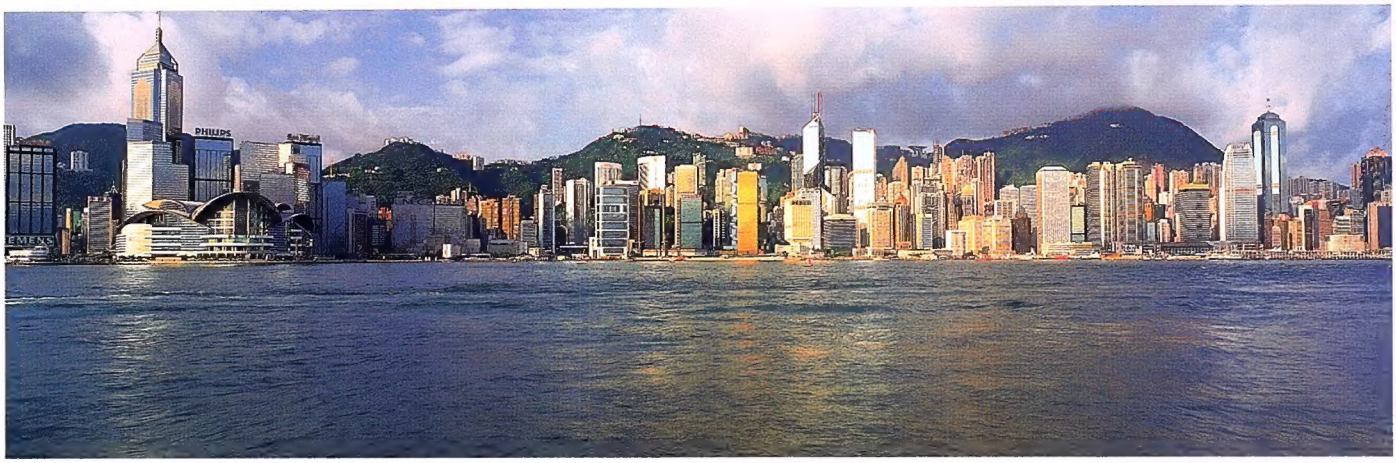

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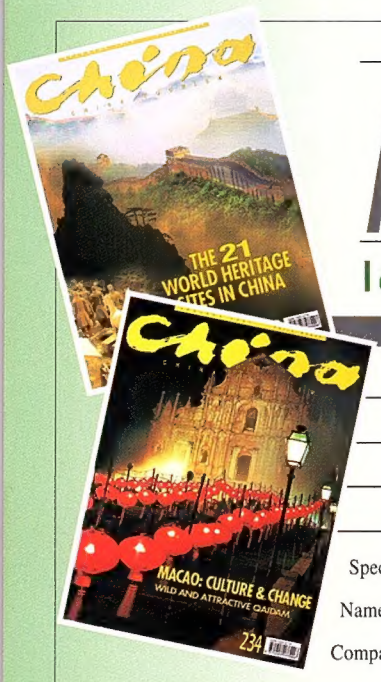

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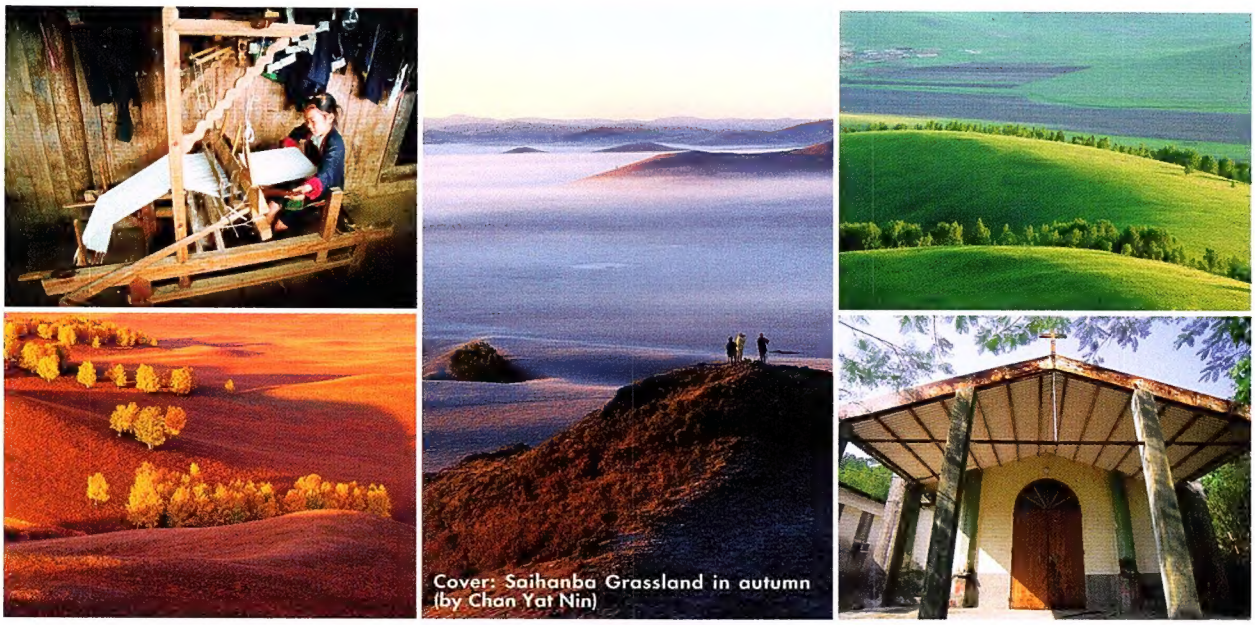
CHINA TOURISM

CONTENTS

No. 260 March 2002



From the Editor

7 For Generations to Come

8 Update

10 Travel Notes

13 Calendar

Feature Story

14 Playground of the Emperors: Chengde and the Bashang Highland

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, Li Rong, Yu Lei, Wang Demin
Article by Tsang Po Ki

When Emperor Kangxi decided to build the Mulan Hunting Ground on the highland of Bashang in today's Hebei and Inner Mongolia, he meant to satisfy both his personal hobby of hunting and the national need of defending the Qing Empire. By leading his sons, ministers and generals to go hunting there, the emperor put the royal army through many drills. Meanwhile, he invited chieftains of surrounding tribes to observe or take part in those events to win their trust and support. After many historical vicissitudes, the original green land has been damaged to a doomed degree. Still, the remaining grassland, together with the Mountain Resort and the Eight Outer Temples in Chengde, attracts thousands of tourists with its charming natural environment. Bitter historical lessons tell us that natural resorts like Bashang, which we dearly need for our survival, require much better care from us.

City Snaps

40 A Day in Beijing: In Photos and Words

Photos by Yan Bailiang Article by Zhu Jianhui

Beijing is an ancient capital as well as a modern metropolis. This story, with photos taken within 24 hours, reflects the liveliness of Beijing life. There are scenes of the very progressive and those representing the very traditional, old Beijing.

Highlights

44 From a Place Far from Home to a Foreign Country: Knocking About Harbin and Vladivostok

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, Liu Xiangyang, Chu Kit
Article by Chu Kit

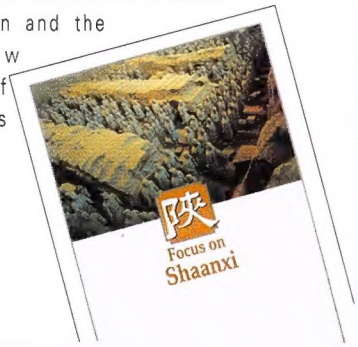
Cross border tours are very popular these days. When people make a tour or business trip to Harbin in Heilongjiang Province, they can easily join a tour group to visit the Russian port city Vladivostok.

FOCUS ON XINJIANG

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, all providing tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem embedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak, the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique and colourful culture.

FOCUS ON SHAANXI

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



FOCUS ON YUNNAN

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate all year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-la, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

The Call of China's West

FOCUS ON TIBET

The Tibet Autonomous Region of China is a land of mystery for tourists, a land of wonders for explorers, a land of purity for Buddhists, and the ultimate challenge for mountaineers. Its beautiful landscapes, unique geographical features and rich cultural legacy continue to attract an increasing number of visitors.

The countless attractions of Tibet make it impossible to include them all in one book. This photographic publication offers an introduction to some of the Region's most celebrated features: the Potala Palace and its precious collection of cultural relics; the Jokhang Temple with strings of worshippers prostrating themselves before it; the Shoton Festival and the Sunning of Buddha ceremony; the ruins of the mystical Guge Kingdom; and the amazing Qiangtang Grassland....

At the same time, *Focus on Tibet* outlines the six major routes to Tibet and the many stunning landscapes found along the way.

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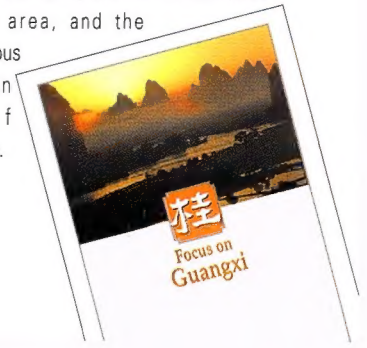
FOCUS ON GUIZHOU

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huanguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

FOCUS ON GUANGXI

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the diverse traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



China
CHINA TOURISM

CONTENTS

No. 260 March 2002

Discoveries

52 The Basha Tribe from Another Age
Photos by Lu Xianyi, Chan Yat Nin, Chen Guisheng
Article by Zhang Xiaosong
In the remote mountainous area bordering Guizhou and Guangxi, the Miao people of the Basha tribe retain their lifestyle as passed down from their ancestors. With little contact with the outside world, the tribe abides by the rules of their unique social system.

HK Mosaic

58 Chasing Wind and Waves in Sai Kung East
Photos & article by Liu Jiang

On the Way

62 My Feelings for the Axu Grassland
Photos & article by Yu Qiong
A young woman from Shanghai has visited the grassland inhabited by Tibetans again and again — in summer, in winter, with a group, by herself.... Still, when her last visit ended, she felt her heart was not with her.

Customs

68 Children in Jubilant Celebrations
Photos & article by Wang Min

Sidetracks

70 Experiences in Surmounting Difficulties

Culture

74 Fish Jumping on the Yellow River — a Lost Scene
Photos & article by Yang Xingfang

Culinary Delights

75 The Mosuo Preserved Pork
Photos & article by Song Ming

Travel Journal

76 Visiting the Tajiks in China's Northwest
Photos & article by Gu Bingshu

77 Autumn Scenes of Miyaluo
Photos & article by Sam Chiu

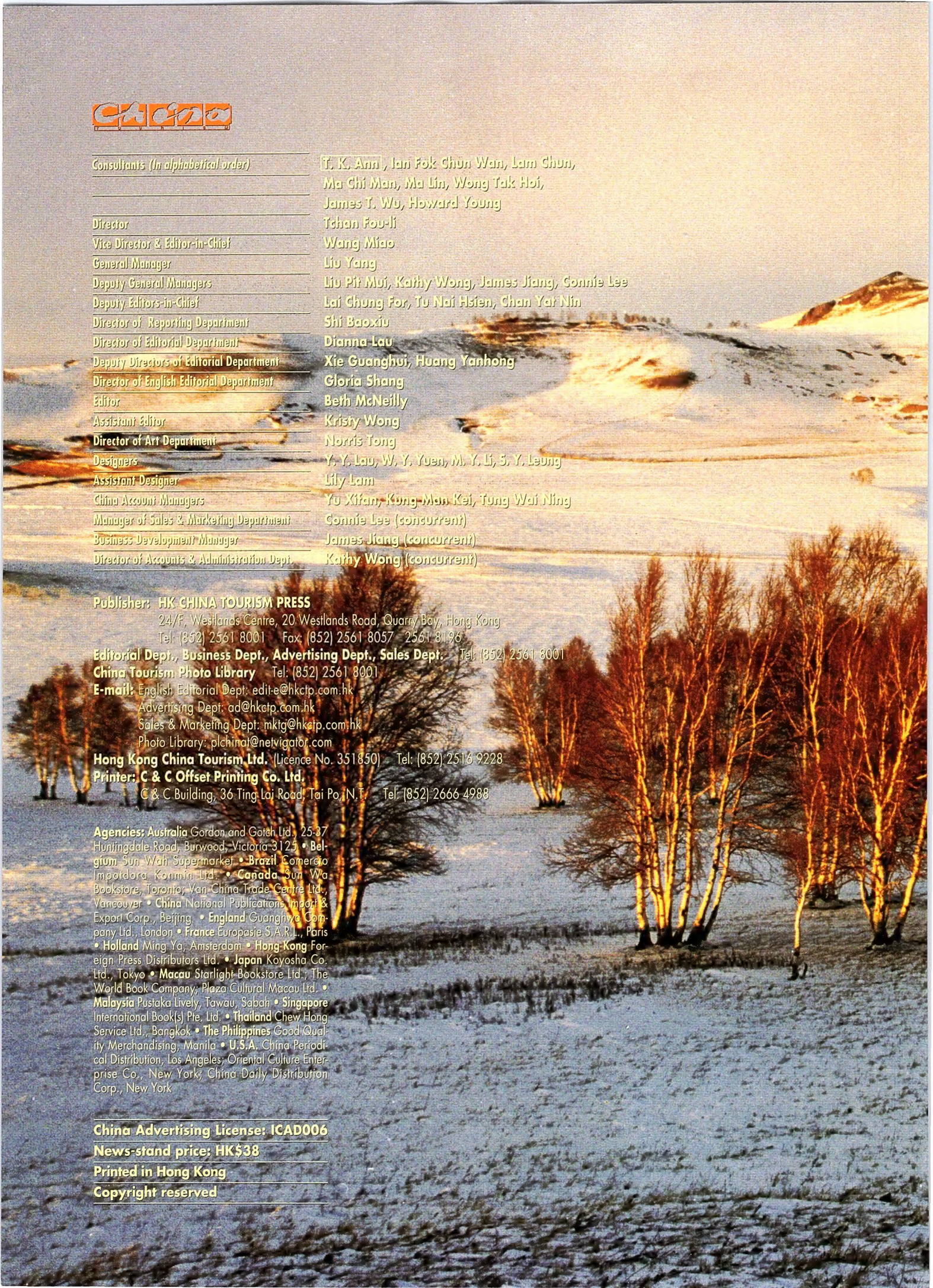
Photography

78 Photographing Markets: How to Control Visual Chaos
Photos & article by Robert Jerome

80 Experiences

86 Executive's Memo

88 Next Issue



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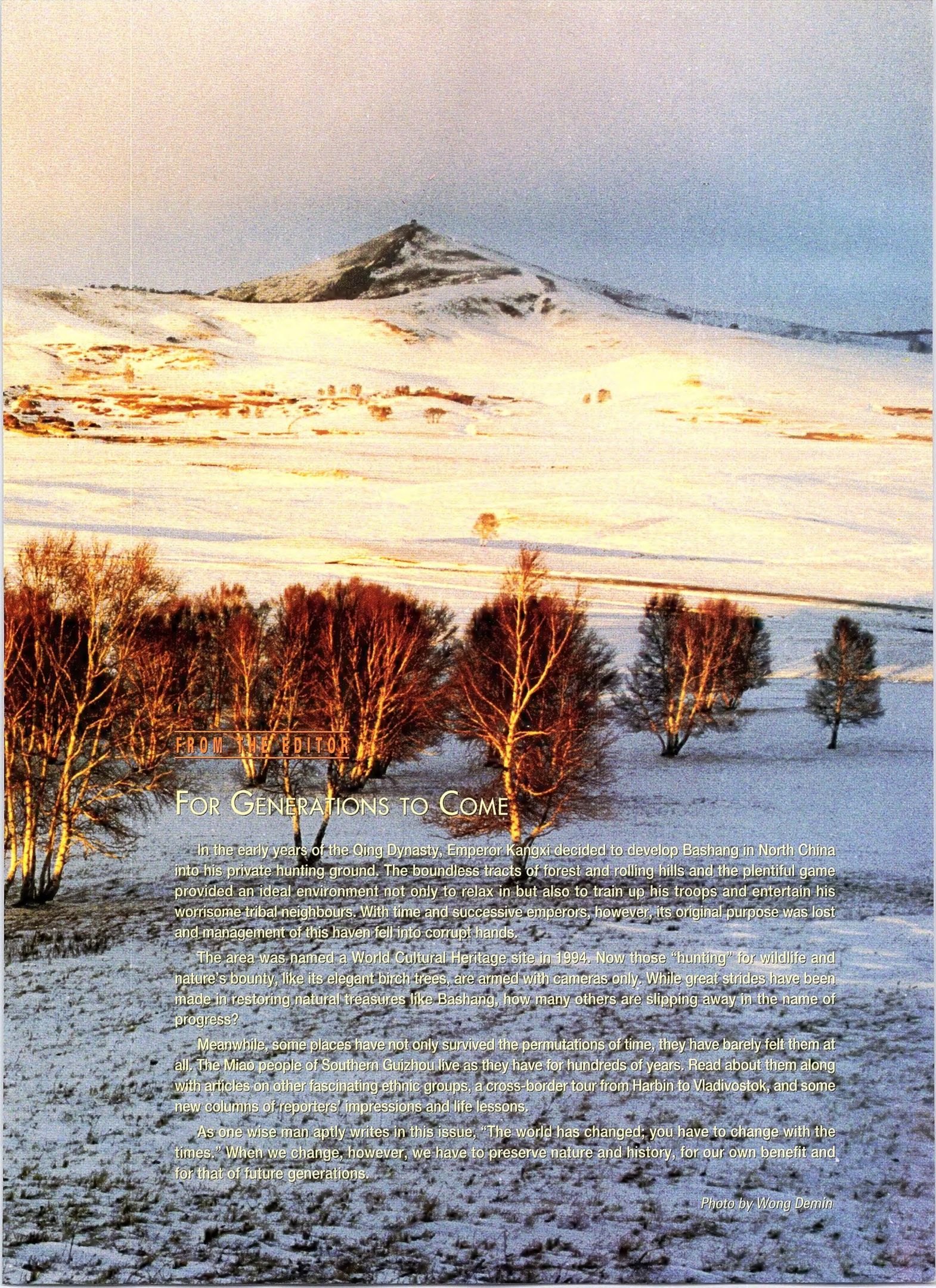


FROM THE EDITOR

For Generations to Come

In the early years of the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Kangxi decided to develop Bashang in North China into his private hunting ground. The boundless tracts of forest and rolling hills and the plentiful game provided an ideal environment not only to relax in but also to train up his troops and entertain his worrisome tribal neighbours. With time and successive emperors, however, its original purpose was lost and management of this haven fell into corrupt hands.

The area was named a World Cultural Heritage site in 1994. Now those "hunting" for wildlife and nature's bounty, like its elegant birch trees, are armed with cameras only. While great strides have been made in restoring natural treasures like Bashang, how many others are slipping away in the name of progress?

Meanwhile, some places have not only survived the permutations of time, they have barely felt them at all. The Miao people of Southern Guizhou live as they have for hundreds of years. Read about them along with articles on other fascinating ethnic groups, a cross-border tour from Harbin to Vladivostok, and some new columns of reporters' impressions and life lessons.

As one wise man aptly writes in this issue, "The world has changed; you have to change with the times." When we change, however, we have to preserve nature and history, for our own benefit and for that of future generations.

Photo by Wong Demin

US$5.3 Billion for the Protection of the Three Gorges, Chongqing

The Chinese government has allocated 43.9 billion yuan (US$5.3 billion) for the protection of the environment and cultural relics in the Three Gorges area of the Yangtse River, where the country's largest water conservation project is underway.

A great part of the fund, 39 billion yuan, will be invested to curb pollution of the water of the Three Gorges Reservoir and the upper reaches of the Yangtse River. Four billion yuan will be used for the inspection and prevention of geological disasters that may be caused by the building of the dam. About 700 million yuan will be used to protect cultural relics above the ground and investigate those underground. The Chongqing city government will launch five programmes over the next two years to control air pollution in its urban areas, including: closing down 567 stone quarries; banning diesel buses and other heavily-polluting vehicles from key zones; promoting the use of low-sulphur coal; and reconstructing, moving or shutting down 12 large, heavily-polluting enterprises. Trees will be planted on the banks of the river.

So far, more than 800 industrial and mining enterprises have been moved away from the Three Gorges area. Two of the 10 county seats in the area have been moved in their entirety, and 107 towns have already been built to replace those to be submerged by the new reservoir.

Wuda Lianchi Geographic Park Opens in Heilongjiang

The Wuda Lianchi (Five Linked Lakes) in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province is a geographical belt of old and new volcanoes. The old ones were formed from 600,000 to 120,000 years ago; the new ones erupted during the years 1717-1721 and are the youngest volcanoes in China. Magma from the eruptions cut the Baihe River into five sections, forming the Five Linked Lakes. The volcano ruins and related topography are well preserved in the area. The area was designated a national nature reserve of volcanic geology in November 1996. In March 2001, it was approved to become one of the nation's first geology parks.

The park covers an area of 70 square kilometres. It is also known for naturally cold, healthful mineral water. The mineral-rich mud can be used to treat various diseases as well. The area had long been a famous scenic resort and sanatorium before the park was established.

Ming City to Be Restored in Qufu, Shandong

Qufu in East China's Shandong Province is the birthplace of Confucius, the most influential ancient philosopher and educator of China. Related cultural relics, presented in the Confucius Temple, Mansion and Cemetery, attract tourists from home and abroad, making the small town a favoured destination.

To further tap its tourism resources, the city decided to rebuild the Ming city, and a foundation-laying ceremony was held at the end of last year. The old city of Qufu was built in 1513, the eighth year of the Zhengde reign of the Ming Dynasty, to protect the Confucius Temple. Its brick city walls were six metres high and three metres thick, with a circumference of 4.8 km. There were five city gates; in addition to a gate opening out to each of the four directions, a fifth one was located at the southeast corner. The local government office stood to the west of the Confucius Temple and most of the shops were in the east section of the city. In its central part of 0.76 square kilometres were the Confucius Temple and Mansion and more than 30 distinctive mansions of noble families, including the Yan Mansion of the descendants of Yan Hui, a promising disciple of Confucius.

The city walls were taken down in 1978 to give way to "modern" urban development. Nine years later, in 1987, all the new buildings constructed on the ruins of the Ming city walls were removed and the moat was rebuilt. Now, the Qufu Ming City is listed as one of the top seven priority projects to be developed in Shandong Province. The renovation plan will include the rebuilding of the city walls and gates, the Yan Mansion and 12 other mansions, the paving of the streets with stone slabs, and developing the major commercial streets as they were in ancient times. A 1,400-metre-section of the city wall will be finished this year and the whole renovation will be completed in 2005.

Partnership Between Air China and Hilton

China's leading airline, Air China, has entered into a global partnership with world-renowned hotel management group Hilton. Their agreement gives members of the Air China Companion Frequent Flyer Programme an opportunity to earn an Air China reward flight if they stay at a Hilton hotel in China and other Hiltons across the world.

Hilton has hotels in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Dalian and Chongqing so far and plans to build more in China in the coming years.

China's Largest Bamboo Botanical Garden Built in Changning, Sichuan

Century Bamboo Garden, the largest botanical garden focusing on bamboo in China, opened to the public at the end of last year in Changning County, Sichuan Province. The garden covers 200 hectares of land and contains 332 varieties of bamboo, including 58 local varieties and 274 imported from other parts of China and countries such as India, Japan and Thailand.

The garden is comprised of the Central Area, the Outlying Ecological Environment Area, the Cuihu (Green Lake) Ecotour Area and a zone designated for administration and service. The Central Area covers 60 hectares and is divided into five gardens, including a Bamboo Nursery Garden, Bamboo Variety System Garden, Bamboo Culture Research Garden, Rare Bamboo Garden and Bamboo Grove Ecology Garden.

Century Bamboo Garden is designed for both research and tourism. While open to the public as a scenic spot, it also provides facilities and reference materials for researching the growth, variety, processing and protection of bamboo. Additionally, it is the biggest bamboo gene centre in China.

Beijing in Action for 2008 Olympics

Beijing is working on an ambitious overall strategy to ensure smooth preparations for the 2008 Olympics while boosting the urban development of the Chinese capital.

The Beijing Organising Committee of the 2008 Olympics (POCOG) was established in mid-December 2001. Preparations will be carried out in three stages. The first stage, from December 2001 to June 2003, is to be used for general planning and as a warm-up for the organisers. Major facilities for the games will be constructed between July 2003 and June 2006. The remaining time before the opening of the 2008 Olympics will allow organisers to test these facilities and check other preparations for the games.

Mystery of Jinstyle Cave Revealed, Inner Mongolia

A cave on the Xilin Gol Grassland in Inner Mongolia had long been considered a mysterious place by local herdsmen. After more than a year's study, beginning in July 2000, archaeologists found that it had sheltered people at least 10,000 years ago.

The cave is 16 metres wide and 24 metres deep, with a deposit of five metres thick. In the bottom layer of the deposit, archeologists found stone tools from the middle or late Palaeolithic era, as well as bones of wild animals; as most of the bones are of wild horses, it is believed they were the main food supply of the early people. In the middle and top layers, archaeologists unearthed cultural relics from 30,000-3,000 years ago, including a huge amount of grey and black pottery segments and a few bronzes. The pottery, jars, mugs and tripods, found in the top layer were all handmade and had been fired at low temperatures. Refined stone tools and bone instruments were found in the middle layer.

Experts claim the discovery is very important to the study of human migration and cultural and social development of the grassland dwellers.

Guangzhou Listed as International Garden City

Guangdong The 2001 International Garden City Competition held in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone announced its winners on December 3, 2001. Guangzhou, capital city of South China's Guangdong Province, was honoured with third place as a 2001 International Garden City among 34 entrant cities from 18 countries. The only Chinese city to compete, Guangzhou is also the Garden City with the highest population (over one million residents). First place was awarded to Westminster in Britain, and second place went to Los Angeles in the United States. Guangzhou and Tswana in South Africa shared the third place ranking.

2002 Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival

Jiangsu The Nanjing International Plum Blossom Festival 2002 is confirmed to be hosted from February 26 (the 15th day of the first Lunar New Year Month, the day for the Lantern Festival) to March 17, in Nanjing, capital city of East China's Jiangsu Province.

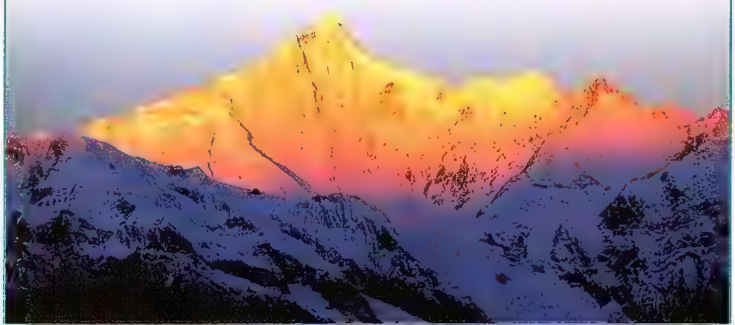
The opening ceremony will again be held in Bo'ai (Universal Love) Square at the Mausoleum of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. The organisers stress the participation of the common people in the event. Traditional local performing arts, such as high-stilt walking, lion dancing, and huge Chinese lanterns, will brilliantly commence the fair. At night, a bonfire party will be hosted in Baima (White Horse) Park, followed by a fireworks show. A Chinese fireworks team will display their latest products.

One of the 12 programmes planned for the festival, the floral float, will amaze the audience with several breakthrough features. The parade will include a song-and-dance troupe, a live band, magic and acrobatics, creating a carnival atmosphere. The audience may catch fresh flowers, candies and ornaments thrown to them by the performers, or they can take photos with performers dressed up as famous cartoon characters. The parade will also appear in neighbouring cities such as Suzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Yangzhou. A CD ROM introducing Nanjing will be released.

Other events include the Hunan Road Gala, the Meihua Lantern Fair in the Confucius Temple, Plum Blossom Service Month, and various celebrations held in other venues.

New Flights Between Kunming and Zhongdian

Yunnan In late November 2001, Yunnan Airlines officially opened new flights between Kunming and Zhongdian, both situated in Southwest China's Yunnan Province. According to the latest schedule, the flight from Kunming to Zhongdian, capital of the Dêqên Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, departs at 17:50 and returns at 19:20 every Wednesday; another flight leaves Kunming for Zhongdian at 18:20 and returns at 19:20 every Friday. The new routes ease travel from Kunming, capital city of Yunnan Province, to Zhongdian, the world-famous Shangri-La in China.



Theme for China's Tourism 2002

China Late last year, the State Tourism Administration announced that "Chinese Folk Arts Tours" to be the theme for China's tourism in 2002. Chinese folk arts can reveal much about the national character as well as distinguished regional flavours. The theme's function is to promote the fantastic folk arts, their ancient origins and tourism as a whole in China. Activities can be divided into three types.

New Year Celebrations:

These include the opening ceremony of the 2002 Jilin Folk Arts Tour and the International Ice & Snow Festival held in Jilin Province; Liang-Zhu Wedding Culture Festival in Qinxian County, Zhejiang; Jiangxi Folk Arts Festival in Nanchang; New Year celebrations throughout Shanxi, such as at Pingyao and the Qiao Family Mansion; Guangzhou New Year Flower Fair; Yuyuan Garden Lantern Show in Shanghai; International Plum Blossom Festival in Nanjing; and the Butter Flower Show in Lhasa, Tibet.

Cultural Events:

These include the International Confucius Cultural Festival in Qufu, Shandong; Emperor Yandi Memorial Ceremony in Zhuzhou, Hunan; Guilin Travel Festival in Guangxi; Three Gorges International Travel Festival and World Singing Concert in Chongqing; Mazu Memorial Ceremony in Fujian; Shanghai Tea Culture Festival; Wuqiao Acrobatic Folk Cultural and Tourist Festival; Zhoushan International Sand-moulding Festival; and the Yangzhou Third-month Mist and Flower Travel Festival.

Brilliant Travel in Western China:

Wang Zhaojun (one of the Top Four Beauties of ancient China) Culture Festival in Huhhot and the Nadam Fair on the Hulun Buir Grassland, Inner Mongolia; Dawaze Festival in Xinjiang; Nadun Fair in July in Qinghai; Wangguo Festival in August and Shoton Festival, both in Tibet; Zigong International Lantern Show in Sichuan; Zunyi International Youth Acrobatics Festival in Guizhou; Ningxia Folk Arts Festival; and Kunming International Tourism Fair in Yunnan.

To emphasise the unique qualities of each festival, the State Tourism Administration has also listed eight special travel features: Chinese folk operas; folk artefacts; Chinese grottoes; frescoes and sculptures; gardens and architecture; hometowns of Chinese folk arts; religious arts; and folk festivals and characteristic towns and villages in China.

New Admission Fee for Mount Lushan Scenic Area

Jiangxi Earlier this year, the Jiangxi Provincial authorities permitted an increase in the admission fee for the Lushan Scenic Area from 50 to 85 yuan/person. The admission fee for the Floral Path Park in the scenic area has been eliminated. The new admission fee does not include entrance to the following places in Mount Lushan Scenic Area: Bailu (White Deer) Cave Academy (20 yuan); Botanical Garden (10 yuan); Meilu Villa (15 yuan); Museum of Mount Lushan (10 yuan); and site of the Lushan Convention (10 yuan). Meanwhile, lavatories in the scenic area are free.

Phoenix TV: Pole to Pole Expedition

Hong Kong After the ceremony held on December 7, 2001 and attended by HKSAR Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, a crew of 20 from Hong Kong Phoenix TV and CCTV set off for the shooting of the "Pole to Pole Expedition", a documentary series.

The trip is expected to take eight months to finish. The "Pole to Pole Expedition" series will be the third cross-country programme filmed by Hong Kong based Phoenix TV. Travelling from the Antarctic to the Artic in six jeeps, the crew members will pass through more than 20 countries and regions. These include the South Pole, Easter Island, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Belize, Mexico, the United States, including Alaska, and Canada.

According to Zhong Zhengqin, one of the planners and team leaders of the crew, trekking along the Andes Mountain Ridge will be the most marvellous part of the trip. The crew will experience native customs and observe the changing landscape as they ascend to the high altitudes. Having conducted five field trips to the South Pole, geologist Liu Xiaohan has developed a deep love of the place and hopes to show everyone what it looks like.

Based on the spirit of travelling and viewing the world through Chinese eyes, and employing a lighthearted tone, the programme will incorporate what the expedition members see and hear every day and discuss the Earth, sky (the Ozone), oceans, cultures, histories, customs, and contrasts between the East and the West, etc. Thus the worldwide audience can obtain a clearer picture of the relationship between changes to the earth and the development of human history.

The Nanhai Hotel Package

Shenzhen From now until March 31, 2002, the Shenzhen Nanhai Hotel is offering a package featuring healthy and happy travels. The cost of a tour for two people is only HK$788. Tourists can stay in spacious, comfortable rooms while enjoying the hotel's facilities. They are also featuring a unique "Healthy Wild Fungus Hotpot". Guests may also enjoy a free 60-minute foot massage or a 50-minute Chinese herbal massage by paying an additional HK$50. More privileges are on offer, such as entering the Wild Game Wonderland for free, golfing at the Shekou Greenland Club at an 80 percent discount, or going to one of the theme parks in Shenzhen by free shuttle bus. The theme parks include Splendid China, China Folk Culture Village, Window of the World and Happy Valley.
Nanhai Hotel: Tel: (755) 669 2888; Nanhai Hotel Hong Kong Office: 2315 5388

In China, No Hotel Is More Comfortable Than a Home

Profound affection comes from hospitality

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Liu Shaoqi's Private Plane to Be Displayed in His Hometown

Hunan In the foreseeable future, the plane used by Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969), former president of the People's Republic of China and one of the first generation of Chinese Communist Party leaders, will be restored in Liu's hometown in Huaminglou, Ningxiang County of Central China's Hunan Province.

The plane was first left unused at a military airport in Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province, after being retired from service. Later, having heard that it was the plane formerly used by Comrade Liu Shaoqi and many other Communist Party leaders, the Sichuan Province Regional Railway Construction Company spent more than 2 million yuan to buy it. After analysis and repairs, in 1995 the plane was placed in an educational centre in a park in Pengzhou, a rural town 40 km from Chengdu. The exhibition only aroused a short-lived interest among the public. Then, both the park and the plane were abandoned.

A dramatic turning point changed the plane's fate when two enthusiastic reporters from the Hunan TV News Centre and the director of the Huaminglou Liu Shaoqi Memorial Hall met with Bao Chaoshan, a member of the special flight team and the then flight mechanic. The old man confirmed that the plane, an Ilyushin-18, was the one which Liu had taken on a tour of Southeast Asia in 1963, and then flew from Beijing to Wuhan with Kim Il Sung, then President of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, to meet Mao Zedong.

This legendary plane was imported from Russia in 1959. It served as a special plane for top Communist leaders. It is 36.9 metres in length and weighs 32 tons, with a pair of 37.4-metre-long wings. Though damaged in several places, the plane retains its silver-white exterior. This plane contributed greatly to strengthening relationships between China and other countries. Besides being an important element in the life and work of China's former president, it has also witnessed the country's development. It is a crucial relic for contemporary Chinese history.

On November 24, 2001, what would have been the 103rd birthday of Comrade Liu, a solemn ceremony dedicated to the restoration of the plane and its return from Pengzhou to Huaminglou was hosted at the Liu Shaoqi Memorial Hall. Meanwhile, construction of the parking apron for the plane has also started. The memorial hall has promised to fully restore the plane to its previous state, thereby making it an attraction for tourists from home and abroad.

Liu Shaoqi was born to a wealthy family in Hunan. He was elected president of the PRC from 1959 to 1968. Unfortunately, attacked during the early stages of the "cultural revolution" (1966-76) as the "No. 1 capitalist-roader", he was stripped of power in 1968 and persecuted until his death later on.

The INTEGER Hong Kong Pavilion

Hong Kong Opened on November 6, 2001, at the Tamar Site in Central, the INTEGER Hong Kong Pavilion is a non-profit research and educational project. It is set up to demonstrate how intelligent and green technologies can deliver better value and functions in housing. Enhanced by a series of temporary exhibits, its main themes are innovations in construction, technology and environmental performance. Covering 20,000 square metres, the permanent INTEGER exhibition includes an audiovisual, interactive tour of the Pavilion, show flats and a sky garden. Visitors are guided by large plasma screens or individual "explorer" handsets. The Pavilion's main attractions are a model of a 40-storey tower block, built using INTEGER methods, and two full-size, 865-square-foot apartments. These apartments are designed to demonstrate how intelligent and green construction methods and IT applications can improve living standards and be energy efficient.

Opening hours: 9:00-19:00 (Tuesday to Sunday)
Admission fees: Child / Student — Weekdays $10; Weekends/holidays $15.
Senior Citizen (over 65) — Weekdays $15; Weekends/holidays $20
Adult — Weekdays $25; Weekends/holidays $35
Website: www.integer.com.hk

Lijiang Plans Package Admission Ticket

Yunnan Following the practice of some historic tourist attractions in Asian countries like Vietnam and Nepal, the ancient city of Lijiang is planning to charge set admission fees in future. The ticket, at about 80 yuan, will include entrance to major scenic spots such as the Chieftain Mu's Mansion, Lion Mountain, Wangu Tower and other major scenic spots in the ancient city. Profits from the tickets will be invested to develop Lijiang's infrastructure such as roads, bridges and water system, as well as granting subsidies to low-income residents.

MARCH

February 1—March 10

Zigong Lantern Fair The Zigong Lantern Fair, dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), is an important annual occasion in Southwest China's Sichuan Province. Lanterns of various styles and materials, combine to form an enchanting scene as well as a big tourist attraction in Zigong.

Place: Zigong Lantern Park, 6 Zigong Garden Road, Zigong, Sichuan

March 4-17

Hong Kong Flower Show The 2002 Hong Kong Flower Show will be held in Victoria Park in Causeway Bay. Numerous internationally renowned experts have been invited to present dazzling floral displays. Floral arrangements are planned for special venues, in hotel lobbies and shopping malls all over the territory. The event is organised by the Hong Kong Tourism Board and sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charity Fund. The Hong Kong Flower Extravaganza is also planned as a prelude to the Flower Show with supporting events, such as cultural shows, floral tea tasting and flower feasts.

February 9—March 1

Shanxi New Year Celebrations The New Year Celebrations in Shanxi include performances of various domestic Shanxi arts, such as singing, drama and dance. The tradition was established in the Qin and Han period about 2,000 years ago, and reached its prime in the Ming and Qing periods. These celebrations are believed to bring joy, auspiciousness and blessings to people. Towns and villages all have their own specific celebrations. In the ancient city of Pingyao, there will be Lantern Show. A Lucky Bell will be hung in Mianshan and other activities will be held in the Wang and Qiao family mansions.

Mid-January—Late March

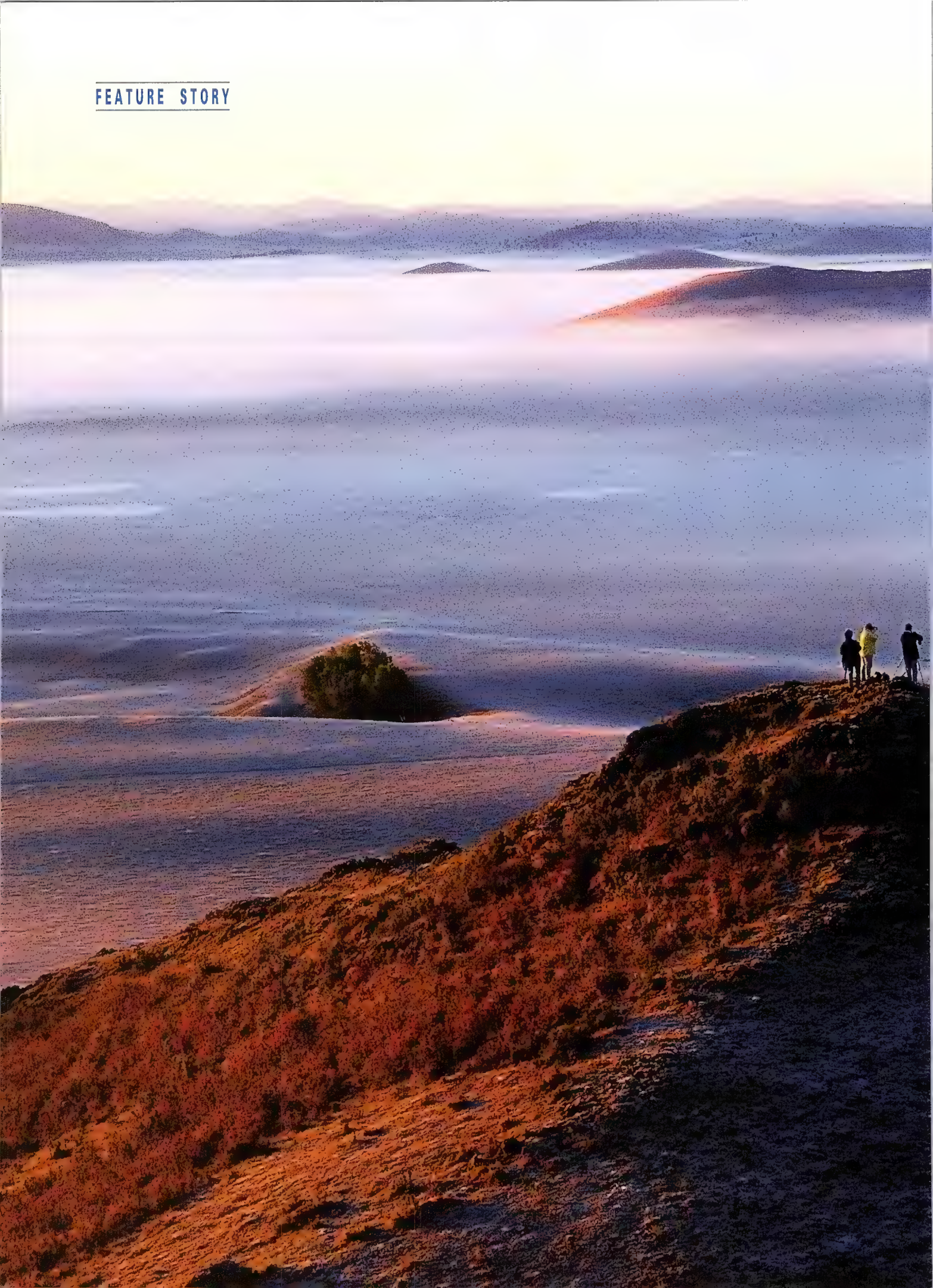
Xilin Gol Ice Sculpture Arts Exhibition The First Xilin Gol Ice Sculpture Arts Exhibition was inaugurated in January and will be open until the middle of March. The fair has been organised jointly by the Xilinhot Government, Xilin Gol League Tourist Bureau and Harbin Ice Sculpture Arts Exhibition Association, with an investment of over 600,000 yuan. Covering an area of 26,000 square metres in Xilinhot's Grassland Park, the exhibition features 76 exquisite ice sculptures. Some are modelled on historical buildings such as the Beizi Monastery and the ruins of the Yuan Dynasty's capital city, or on historic figures, while some depict camels and other animals walking on wild grassland. Tourists can also participate in winter sports so as to experience the life of the northern people.

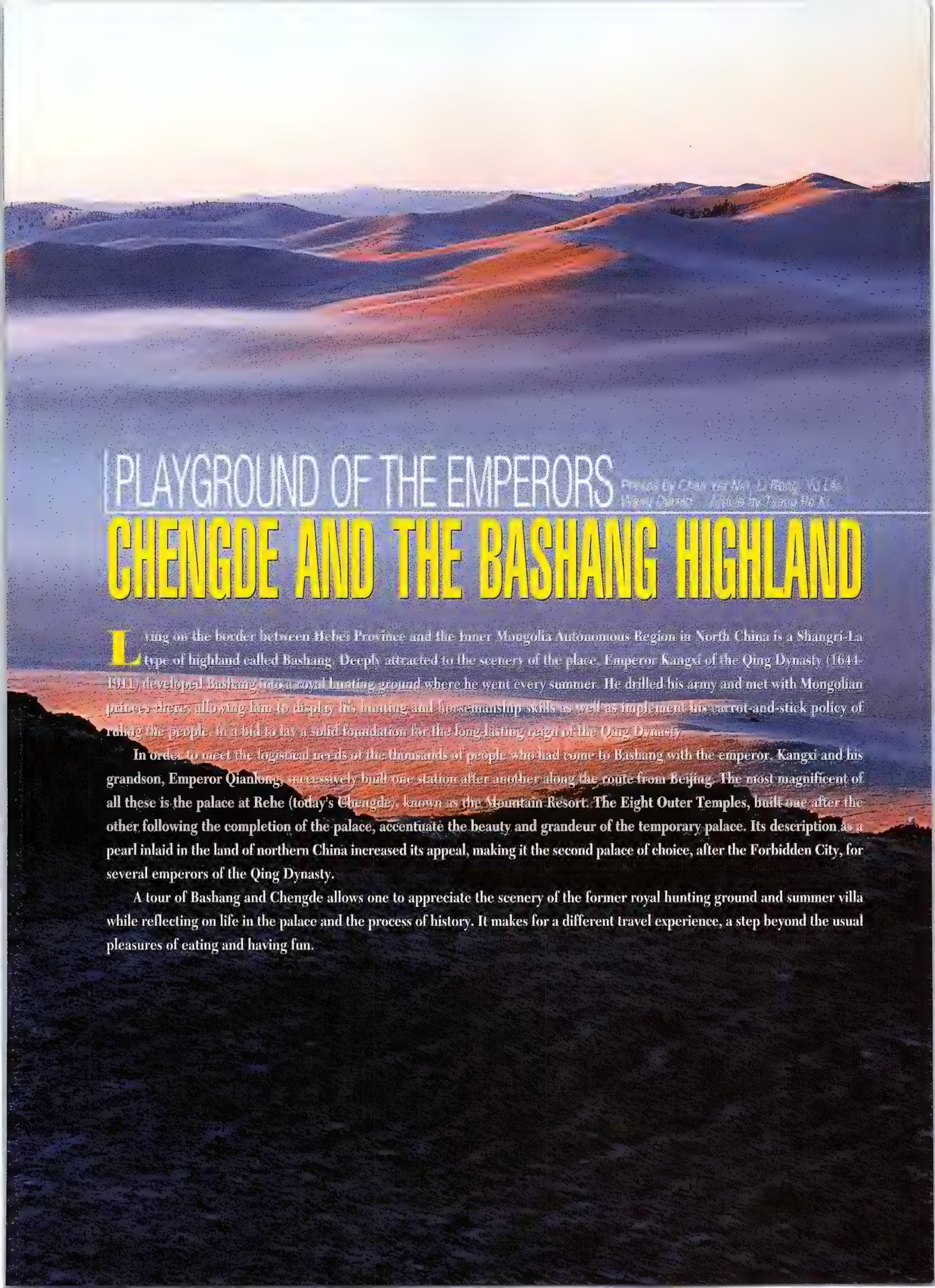
February 27

Tibetan Butter Flower Festival On this day, the 15th day of the first lunar month, the Tibetans in Lhasa hold their Butter Flower Festival at Barkor Street. Exquisite and colourful artworks carved out of butter will be displayed in the temples. The temple halls will be brightly lit, making the sculptures of flowers, Buddhist images and temples even more vivid. Citizens all come to visit the exhibition and share the jubilant atmosphere.

February 21—March 17

Hong Kong Arts Festival The 30th Hong Kong Arts Festival has invited 15 performing groups and a team of world-class artists to provide more than 122 shows in 34 performance venues. Highlights are the Bolshoi Opera's *The Love for Three Oranges*, Moscow Taganka Theatre's *Marat and Marquis de Sade*, and *Le Cercle Invisible*, a magical circus of fantasy and imagination, along with the exhibitions of "A Long Tale with Many Knots: Fluxus in Germany 1962-1994" and "Chinese Archaic Bronzes". For enquiries, please call URBTIX at (852) 2734 9009. Tickets are also available at the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Website of HK Arts Festival: www.hk.artsfestival.org





PLAYGROUND OF THE EMPERORS

Photos by Chen Hai Ma, Li Peng, Yu Lei, Wang Dexin Article by Tsang Po Ki

CHENGDE AND THE BASHANG HIGHLAND

Living on the border between Hebei Province and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in North China is a Shangri-La type of highland called Bashang. Deeply attracted to the scenery of the place, Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) developed Bashang into a royal hunting ground where he went every summer. He drilled his army and met with Mongolian princes there, allowing him to display his hunting and horsemanship skills as well as implement his carrot-and-stick policy of ruling the people, in a bid to lay a solid foundation for the long-lasting reign of the Qing Dynasty.

In order to meet the logistical needs of the thousands of people who had come to Bashang with the emperor, Kangxi and his grandson, Emperor Qianlong, successively built one station after another along the route from Beijing. The most magnificent of all these is the palace at Rehe (today's Chengde), known as the Mountain Resort. The Eight Outer Temples, built one after the other following the completion of the palace, accentuate the beauty and grandeur of the temporary palace. Its description as a pearl inlaid in the land of northern China increased its appeal, making it the second palace of choice, after the Forbidden City, for several emperors of the Qing Dynasty.

A tour of Bashang and Chengde allows one to appreciate the scenery of the former royal hunting ground and summer villa while reflecting on life in the palace and the process of history. It makes for a different travel experience, a step beyond the usual pleasures of eating and having fun.

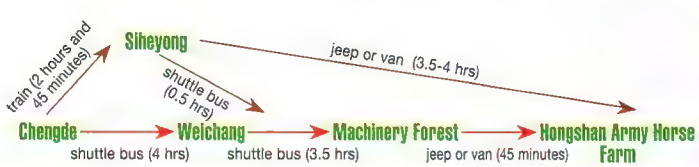
A VENTURE IN BASHANG

My trip to Bashang left me feeling at somewhat of a loss but also deeply attracted to the place. The former sensation was due to the area being so vast and my time so short that I did not know where to begin. Bashang consists of grasslands and forested regions, where Weichang County of Hebei Province borders Harqin Banner of Inner Mongolia, covering a space twice as large as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The attraction came from reading about the charm of the place and now, as the fantastic scenes unfolded before me, I felt mesmerised. After all, it had been the hunting ground of the royal family during the Qing Dynasty.

The Hongshan Army Horse Farm

Luckily when I arrived in the city of Chengde, I met a photographer who told me that normally tourists visit the Saihanba Machinery Forest Farm while photography lovers always make the Hongshan Army Horse Farm their destination. Though not a photography fan, I wanted to see the most beautiful scenery, so I made the Army Horse Farm my destination. The farm is immense, covering 140 square kilometres.

Although the farm stands within the territory of Inner Mongolia, not Hebei Province, the telephone area code is 314, the prefix assigned to Chengde of Hebei. There are two ways to get to the farm from Chengde. One is to take the train to Siheyong Station and then hire a jeep or van to the farm. Another is to take the shuttle bus to Weichang and change buses for the Machinery Forest Farm. Here, one has to hire a jeep or van



to the horse farm. The first method is comfortable and quick but costs more. As a lone tourist, I chose the second route.

Note: If coming from Beijing, you can ride the train to Sibeyong and then change to a bus for Weichang. You then take the early shuttle bus directly to the Hongshan Army Horse Farm. This way is the most economical, but you arrive at Sibeyong at 4 a.m.

I set out in the early morning from Chengde and rode the bus for four hours, arriving in Weichang at noon. All my fellow passengers rushed out. Seeing my camera bag, the conductor guessed that I was going to the Machinery Forest Farm. Thanks to her help, I easily found the right bus at the depot and took advantage of the few minutes before it left to have a bowl of noodles for 3 yuan.

I boarded to find just over 10 people on the forty-seat bus, and I was the only tourist. After we drove through the busy town and its suburbs, our bus began its climb. The scenery outside suggested that better things to see lay ahead. The afternoon sun was scorching, but the considerate towering birch trees formed a natural canopy warding off most of the heat and leaving the carriage comfortably warm. Soon the outside temperature began to drop and cool breezes caressed our faces, a pleasant feeling.

I saw some newly finished hotels tucked in among the white birch groves along the road, creating a scenic quality similar to artful pictures of Scandinavian towns. The hotels were mainly wooden with triangular roofs. Their glistening coats of paint seemed to have been applied only the day before. The potential for tourism had obviously prompted businessmen to start a round of avid construction.

Some four hours later, the bus reached the border of the forest farm. I got off and a fellow traveller on the same bus asked if I was going to the army horse farm. He was driving a jeep there and would be glad to give me a lift. I happily accepted his invitation. We drove for about 45 minutes along a bumpy road of sand, pebbles and yellowish mud cutting through the grassland when a small village, cast in evening glow, emerged.

A World of Tranquillity

This was the Army Horse Farm. On both sides of the sole, muddy road were a dozen one-storey grocery stores, hotels and restaurants. There were few residents. The man took me to a hotel and politely said goodbye. To my great surprise, the simply furnished hotel was not only neat and clean, but also had hot water and a flush toilet.

Satisfied, I put down my heavy luggage and went to have dinner in the hotel's restaurant. The restaurant manager smiled and brought me a cup of tea containing a yellowish flower. She told me that the flower was a local speciality called golden lily (nasturtium). A perennial grass, it tastes bitter and sour but is capable of reducing inflammation and excess inner heat such as that which causes a sore throat. I thanked her and began to thumb through the menu, which was another big surprise: there were so many varieties of both cold and warm dishes. Though the place appeared desolate, the food supply was certainly rich and ample.

What the place did not have were radio relay facilities and thus no outside signals could be received. For contact with the outside, people relied on the few cable phones. Radio and TV were out of the question. Without these basics of urban life, the horse farm was a world of quietness and tranquillity in the evening, with a bright moon and twinkling stars in the sky. For urbanites accustomed to "living on the telephone" and watching television, life here was like that of a hermit.

Note: The Machinery Forest Farm is equipped with better facilities, including a radio station allowing tourists to maintain contact with the rest of the world through their cell phones. For those who come specifically for the scenery, however, the Army Horse Farm is a good choice.

Lost in the Expansive Grassland

I woke up next morning to unmistakably cool air, even though it was high summer. The place is 1,500 metres above sea level and the temperature in summer is only 20-22°C in the morning and evening. It was only 6 a.m., but the sun had already presented itself on the

Previous page: Saihanba Grassland veiled in morning mist. It's a scene ideal for photography enthusiasts. (by Chan Yat Nin)

1. **The topography of the Army Horse Farm, with smoothly sloped hills and lakes scattered on the grassland. (by Gao Jiansheng)**
2. **Visitors can hire a cart to make a circle tour around the General's Lake. (by Tsang Po Ki)**
3. **Each household in Bashang raises their own herd of sheep, which brings in considerable income for the family. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

horizon, sending out its warmth. As I was enjoying a moment in the cool, pure air and the cosy sunshine, a van carrying over a dozen passengers drove up. Tonight, the hotel would be busy.

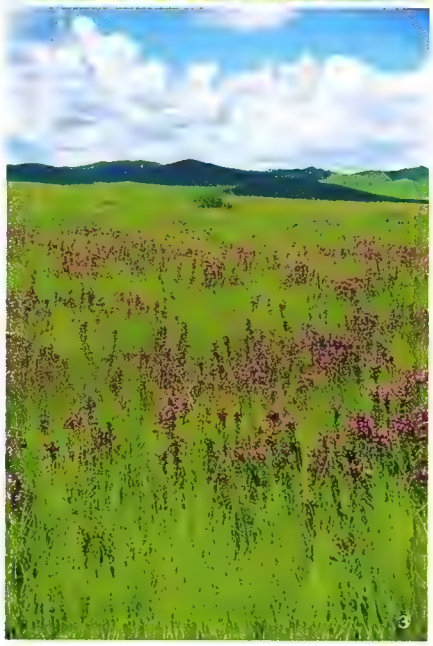
I hired a jeep from the hotel and an experienced driver took me to the grassland, which was vast and flat with only a few road signs. I soon lost my sense of direction, but the driver accurately steered the jeep to good photography points such as the Huamu (Birch) Gully, Taifeng Lake and Jiangjun (General's) Lake. Occasionally, we passed some simple residential houses with sheds for sheep, cattle or horses. Most of the residents made their living by cultivating crops and raising animals. At the very least, a family would have over 20 goats or sheep. Their herds could number as many as 200 or more.

At Bashang, there are also many wild animals, including Mongolian gazelle, red deer, hog and hare. Whether one sees any of them depends purely on luck. My driver, recommended to me by the photographer I met in Chengde, often drove photographers around. He knew most of the places to take good photos. More importantly, he could detect wild animals along the way, pointing out any he noticed. He was able to spot things miles away.

Note: Don't forget to take along your field glasses, for a major activity in Bashang, apart from photography and horseback riding, is viewing wild animals. If you don't have a pair of field glasses, a zoom lens on your camera also works well.

As we moved towards the General's Lake, we passed a birch forest and ran into several residents removing logs. In Bashang, the most common tree is the white birch, which enjoys sunshine, endures cold and regenerates easily in natural conditions. White birch oil, extracted from the bark, is an essential material in cosmetic production and a natural "treasure" of Bashang.

Time flew by and we returned to the farm for lunch. I went into a grocery store to buy some mineral water and noticed the owner staring at me. She seemed depressed and I sensed she recognised me as a dutiful listener.



Small and thin, she had rough skin and puffy hair. She seemed moody and in need of someone to talk to. I willingly became the listener. She had left her parents and children in her home village to do business here. Now she could make enough money to put her two kids through school, but working alone in a grocery store and living far away from her family was by no means an enjoyable way of life. It was the thought of her children's future that encouraged her to go through the hardships.

No One Can Remain Unmoved in Such Beautiful Scenery

In the afternoon, we were on the road again as the jeep drove into the endless expanse of grassland. I had no idea where we were and left it to the driver to take me around. There is no map of Bashang, so even if I'd told him to go here and there, there was no way of checking it. Whenever I saw a favourable spot, he stopped and I took pictures. When we ran across wild animals, I viewed them through my telephoto lens. There was no need to be particular about where a picture was taken because every sight was wonderful.

Looking around, there were green rolling hills here and there. Golden rapeseed lay like silk ribbons draped on the lush green slopes. The contrast of green and yellow created a rich combination. Wild flowers of red, pale yellow, dark blue, purple and other indescribable colours were in full bloom. Dazzlingly beautiful butterflies seemed to be intoxicated by the flowers as they leisurely flapped their wings. Insects hidden in the grass chirped at the tops of their voices as if singing their hearts out on this poetic and beautiful land.

I had never seen any other Inner Mongolian grassland before and now I felt that the overwhelming green made it the most beautiful grassland I had ever seen. The sun cast its rays on the yellow rapeseed, wild geese flew in the blue sky, herds of sheep spread out over the green mountain slopes, ducks happily swam in the jade-like lake water and.... Once you find yourself in such charming natural scenery, in such a pure and unpolluted

environment, appreciating every simple and unique thing, you cannot but feel moved. Before the mountain, you recognise that human life is infinitesimal. And before the grassland, you cannot help exclaiming at the wonder of life.

Note: When driving in Bashang, please protect the grassland and do not drive on the grass. Follow the beaten tracks only. If you wish to take pictures where there are no vehicle tracks, get out and walk. As anywhere else, please do not litter. Smokers should save the butts to dispose of later. It is everyone's responsibility to protect the environment.

When I returned to the hotel, the sun had already sunk below the horizon. The hotel owner was roasting an entire lamb over a fire. He skilfully cut a chunk off for me. I do not eat mutton but I could not resist his hospitality, so I took the meat. Soon the tourists I had seen earlier rushed into the restaurant to enjoy a banquet of whole roast lamb. Their tour leader invited me to join them, but I was fully content at having seen so many beautiful sights during the day and there was nothing more I wanted. After supper, they lit lots of firecrackers, which flashed, boomed and echoed in the darkness, enlivening the small village.

The sky that evening was still vast but it certainly was not tranquil.

Strategies for Taking Photos in Bashang

Hottest spots for taking pictures: Lama Hill, White Birch Gully, Taifeng Lake, Moon Lake, Great West Pond, Five-colour Hill, the Great Valley, Hujia Wanzi and many other places.

Photography in spring and summer: During this period, flowers are in full bloom and large tracts of rapeseed display their beauty. Colourful butterflies dance among the blossoms of red, yellow, purple and blue. Birds sing and insects chirrup. The entire place is permeated with vitality. This is the best season to photograph plants and animals in the greenery. Please note that even during summer, mornings and evenings in Bashang can be very cold. Take along a windcheater.

Photographing the golden autumn: Many photography fans choose to visit Bashang in late September and early October when the leaves change colours. During this period, the weather is cool and pleasant. However, the golden season is short and subject to the influence of global temperature changes.

Photographing wintry scenes: In winter, Bashang is frozen and severely cold, but it still attracts many photographers wishing to capture the icy beauty of

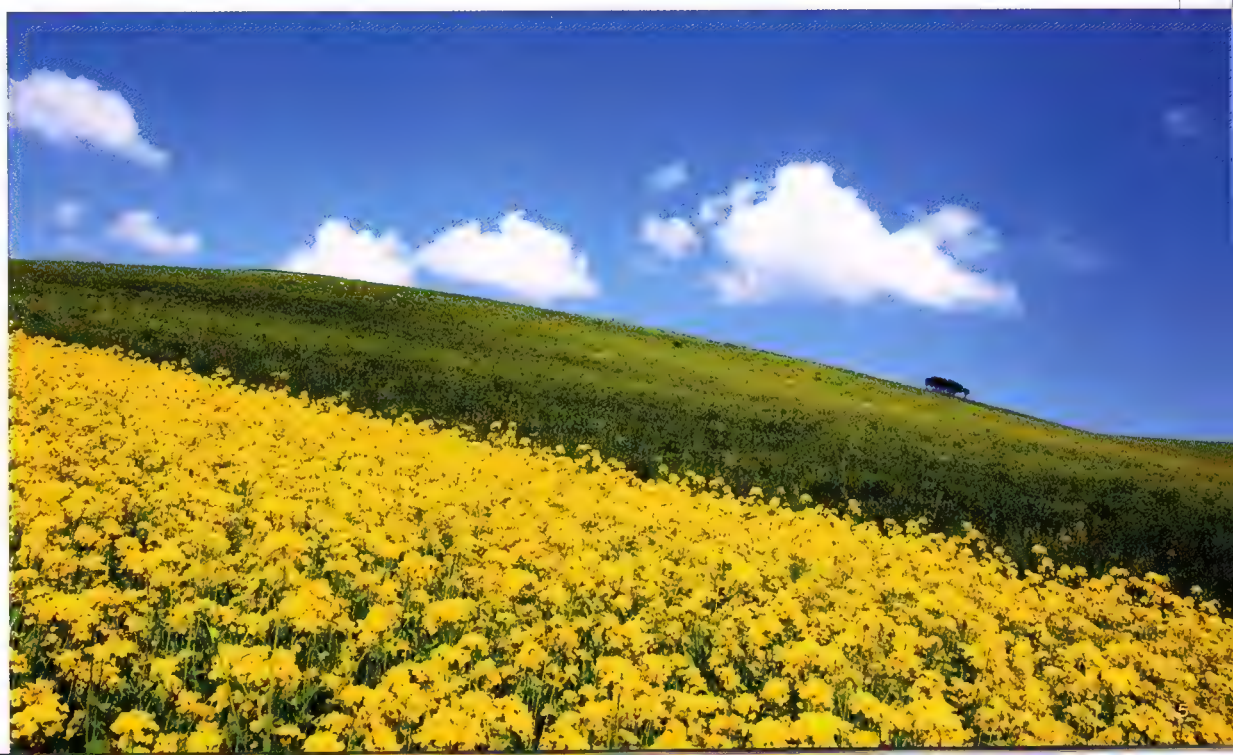
the place. You should bring enough thermal clothing, for the temperature may dip to -30°C. Be sure to protect your photography gear.

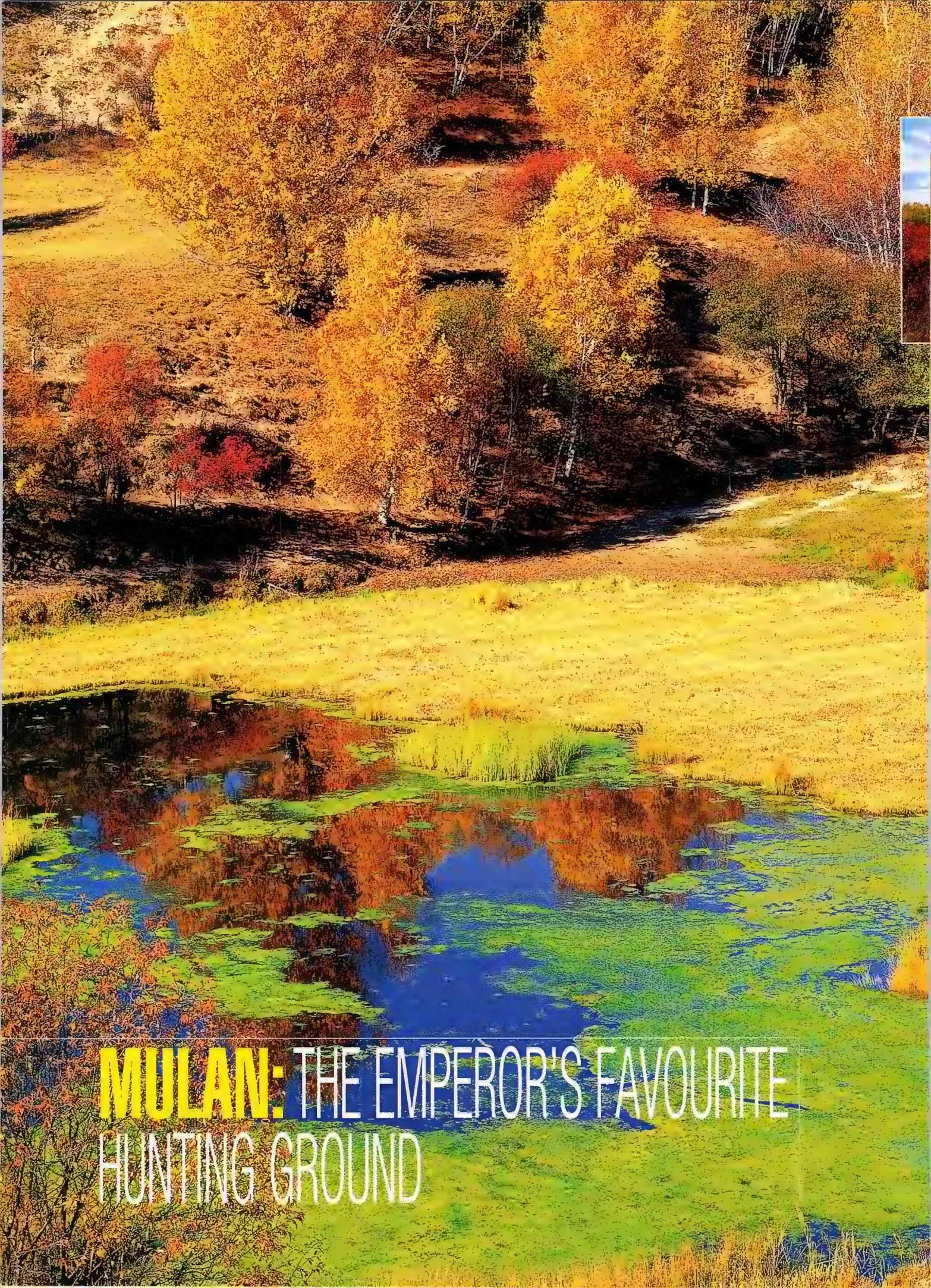
Before you set out, take along a shovel, iron file and other tools to remove snow. Vehicles must be equipped with tyre chains. Ideally, you should have two vehicles travelling together. As there are no radio relay facilities, cell phones are useless. If you get into trouble, there is no way to call for help.

Photography gear: The more the better! A telephoto lens, wide-angle lens, tight-focus lens and tripod are advisable. Pack enough rolls of film.

Warning: Please do not stay out too late, especially in winter. There are only very simple road signs and only experienced drivers can assuredly find their way. Driving in darkness only increases the chance of getting lost. By no means should you drive around by yourself.

1. **Golden lily blossoms on the grassland in summer. The locals use its flower as an herbal medicine to expel heat from the body. (by Wang Demin)**
2. **More than 600 species of plants grow on the grassland and many of them can be used as food or herbal medicine. (by Wang Demin)**
3. **Purple lucerne, a major feeding plant growing on the grassland. (by Tsang Po Ki)**
4. **The Army Horse Farm in midsummer. It seems a vast green rug has been spread on the ground. (by Zeng Baoqi)**
5. **Rape flowers blooming on the grassland of Saihanba, adding more beauty to the highland.**




MULAN: THE EMPEROR'S FAVOURITE
HUNTING GROUND

The former Mulan Hunting Ground was located in today's Saihanba area in northern Hebei Province. In 1681, the 20th year of his reign, Emperor Kangxi saw the area during his inspection tour of this part of his empire and immediately fell in love with it. Surprised to find that it was "blocked from the heat, lushly wooded, with intoxicatingly fresh air, favoured with ample rainfall and full of the vigour of life", he spent over a month here hunting to his heart's content, leaving his footprints on virtually all of the hills and along all the riverbanks.

His Majesty's Decision

Two theories exist regarding the date of the establishment of the Mulan Hunting Ground. According to Notes of the Daily Life of Kangxi, the emperor left the capital, Beijing, in 1681 for the second time to tour the northern region, accompanied by ministers and generals of both Han and Manchu origin. He set out from Xifengkou in Hebei, passed Kuancheng and entered the Harqin Banner in Inner Mongolia where his entourage was joined by Mongolian dukes and princes as well as over 1,500 cavalrymen. Together they crossed the Xierha and Yinhe rivers to arrive in Saihanba. They then went by Baicha and turned southwest to descend from the highland. It was then that the great retinue decided to "make use of the terrain to establish a hunting ground". Thus, many scholars agree that 1681 was the year that the hunting ground was officially founded. Other scholars, however, believe the place was not turned into a hunting ground until 1683.

According to the *Almanac of Chengde*, "The Mulan Hunting Ground is located in the region inhabited by Mongolian tribes north of Chengde and covers an area 1,300 *li* in circumference, being more than 200 *li* north to south and over 300 *li* east to west. It borders Harqin Banner in the east, Qahar Banner in the west, Chengde in the south and Balin and Hexigten in the north. It borders Harqin Banner in the southwest, the Pure Blue and White Rimmed Blue Qahar banners in the southwest, Ongniud in the northeast and the Pure Blue Qahar Banner in the northwest." It is apparent that the place was partly in the region of the pastureland of the Mongolian tribes and they were willing to present the land to the emperor to please him. As a result, 15,300 square kilometres from Chengde to the southwest border of Inner Mongolia suddenly became the emperor's hunting ground, an area 14 times the size of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region! After that, an annual trip north to the hunting ground became a major event in the affairs of state during the Qing Dynasty.

An entourage of some 10,000 people should certainly not be allowed to run around at will in a hunting ground. So the Mulan Hunting Ground was divided into 72 smaller hunting tracts to be visited in different years. This arrangement made its management convenient for the Qing court and ensured that animals and plants were able to flourish and avoid extinction.

The rulers of the Qing Dynasty were from the Manchu ethnic minority and thus not a natural choice to run the whole of China. However, they ruled the country for 300 years and left a unique chapter in Chinese history. How could this happen? Emperor Kangxi's particular method of ruling was a key factor. And his governing skill became apparent through many events, including suppression of the rebellions of Yunnan, Guangdong and Fujian, stopping the building and repairing of the Great Wall and opening up the Mulan Hunting Ground. Superficially, the hunting ground was a place for him to track animals, enjoy outings and host banquets, but it actually served the important function of defending the country.

An Army Drilling Ground

During the quelling of the rebellions, the emperor's army showed cowardice and ineptitude. To avoid fighting, many soldiers remained in the barracks, feigning illness. Some even went so far as to injure themselves before battle, in hopes of being excused from combat. Only 30 years earlier, the eight-banner troops had fought their way into the capital of Beijing to capture the throne in 1644. They displayed such valour that no one could resist their onslaught. Now, however, the same army demonstrated an entire lack of spirit. Why?

For a start, the generals who had led the troops to take the Central Plains were now too old to fight, while the new generation of

1. **Bashang Grassland unfolds a charming picture of brilliant colours in autumn. (by Li Rong)**
2. **The red seedlings look like a red carpet spread on the open land to welcome visitors. (by Li Rong)**
3. **Photography fans chasing the beautiful autumn scenes on the Bashang Grassland. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **Saihanba has ample vegetation, one third of its land being planted with trees. (by Li Rong)**

commanders, playboys from elite families, had no battle experience and neglected to train their soldiers. The Qing army had lost its original effectiveness, a phenomenon that would disturb any ruler. Therefore, rebuilding the army became a pressing issue. By allowing the troops to go hunting every year and organising hunting trips to resemble battles, Kangxi aimed to make his army combative again. Those who did well in the training were rewarded with wine or silk and given promotion opportunities, while officers who performed badly were demoted or even demobilised. This programme weeded out the disinterested while encouraging aspiring commanders and soldiers to excel, eventually bringing the imperial army to new glory. In the battles against Russian troops in 1685 and Junggar soldiers in 1690, the Qing army won complete victories, proving the effectiveness of the programme.

Kangxi once remarked, "The way to run a country is to practise virtue, and let the people live a stable life. When people are happy, the country will enjoy its stability and the border will be peaceful. In fact, the entire nation will stand as a whole in defending the country." This explains why Kangxi did not expend as much effort on building the Great Wall as many of his predecessors did, but instead focused on maintaining well-being at home and cementing friendships with neighbouring nations. He acknowledged the importance of the different Mongolian tribes stationed in the areas bordering China. If the various tribes lived in harmony, it would be very conducive to the security of the country's border. The Mongols were divided into four main factions. Two factions, South Desert Mongolia (also known as Inner Mongolia) and North Desert Mongolia (Karka Mongolia) announced their loyalty to the Qing court soon after the establishment of the dynasty, but their attitude and position were still worrisome. The menace posed by the other two factions, West Desert Mongolia and Qinghai Mongolia, called for careful handling by Emperor Kangxi.

On every hunting trip, the emperor invited the rulers of the different Mongolian tribes to let them see the archery skills of the Qing troops. Sometimes he asked the Mongols to take part in the drilling. Each time, he hosted elaborate feasts and showered them with gifts of gold and silk. He also helped the tribes with poverty relief. In 1689, Gardan of West Desert Mongolia revolted and launched a massive attack on the three tribes of Karka Mongolia, compelling the people there to flee south. Immediately, the emperor assigned a court minister to handle the refugee affair along with assistance supplies. In 1715, the Mongolian region suffered a severe snowstorm, which resulted in serious losses to herdsmen with the deaths of animals. Once again, Kangxi sent representatives with relief aid. There are countless stories like this. Obviously, Kangxi wanted to win the hearts of the Mongolian elite as well as the common people to ensure the strength of the Qing Dynasty.

A Window to Social Problems and People's Lives

Whenever he travelled northward from the capital, the emperor passed through many settlements, giving him the opportunity to find out what life was like among the people. Thereby, he cultivated an image of loving his subjects and checking on local officials. He once said, "As I live deep in the palace, there is no way for me to know for sure whether local officials are virtuous and responsible or not. So I want to go on inspection tours from time to time, and on the way I always visit people to find out what the situation is. To know if local officials have performed well, public opinion must be consulted. If they have done well, ask the people and they will praise them. And if they are not good, ask the people and they will be less open and outspoken. This will immediately reveal whether the officials are doing a good job." It showed that Emperor Kangxi cared for the people; he was diligent in his job and attached great importance to public opinion. Once he uncovered a fatuous, incompetent official, he would not hesitate to punish him.

Another reason for Kangxi's building of the royal family hunting ground was his personal love for hunting. The Manchu were descendants of the Nüzhen who originally lived in the Changbai Mountains and the Songhua and Heilong river regions, where forests thrived and animals abounded. To survive, people naturally learnt horsemanship and archery. Every summer and autumn, armed with bugles made of birch bark, they hunted in the forests. The bugle tones mimicked whinnying deer, attracting the animal and making hunting easier. Emperor Kangxi had inherited his ancestors' natural instincts for hunting. After ascending to the throne, however, he became preoccupied with court affairs and had little time for his hobby. The Mulan Hunting Ground and the traditional hunting trip up north satisfied his longing for this hobby.

Only the Emperor Could Hunt Within the Surrounding Walls

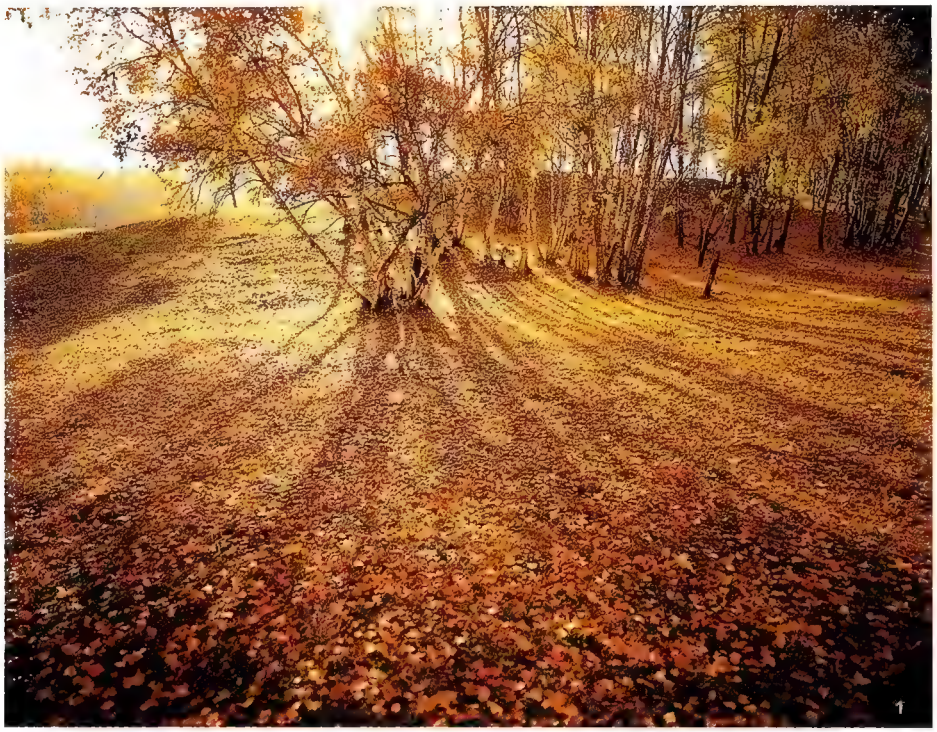
On his early hunting trips, the emperor would only stay a month or two, but the northern trips gradually extended to last for over five months. This change related to the construction of the Mountain Resort in Chengde, halfway between the capital and the Mulan Hunting Ground. Construction did not begin until 1703, which means that in the first 22 years the emperor lived in tents while taking the northern trips. During a time when logistical supplies were scarce along the way, there must have been a large convoy of animals to carry enough food and materials for some 10,000 people. Obviously, a stay away from the capital could not last too long.

In the capital, Emperor Kangxi lived within the heavily guarded Forbidden City, but where did he stay on the expansive grassland of the Mulan Hunting Ground? As an emperor, wherever he went, he was entitled to the best dwelling. Accordingly, an immense Tartar-style palace, called Imperial Camp, was built. Before each of the emperor's hunting trips, the vanguard troop and relevant court officials would build such a temporary palace. Two yellowish tents sat opposite one another in the centre of the Imperial Camp, one being the living quarters and office of the emperor, the other his bedroom. Each tent had only one door and was guarded 24 hours a day. No one, except his personal aides, was allowed to enter without the emperor's consent. Surrounding the tents was a defence line composed of a mesh of yellow ropes. The tents of the court ministers lay 80 steps beyond this.

When the emperor and his retinue arrived at the hunting destination, a yellow tent was quickly erected for him to observe the hunting. Eight-banner troops taking part in the hunting settled nearby. Then, under a yellow flag, they gradually moved in, forming a circle around the yellow tent. The commanders and soldiers removed their hats and raised their horsewhips in a gesture to ask the emperor to commence hunting. The commanding officer rode his horse to the emperor to pass on the message. Thus, the emperor became the only person hunting within the circled area. When he finished, he watched others hunting and also watched his sons and grandsons to see if they were skilful enough with the bow and arrow. This process ended with him choosing the best archers and most gallant hunters. He also tested the combativeness of the eight-banner troops. Mongolian tribal leaders came in turns to watch the hunting every year. Occasionally they joined in. In the end, a banquet was held on the grassland and Emperor Kangxi, accompanied by court officials and Mongolian dukes and princes, feasted on dishes made from the hunted game and watched entertaining performances. This closing programme not only dispelled the intense atmosphere created by the hunt but also displayed the emperor's generosity and kindness.

During Emperor Kangxi's reign, the hunting system was fully observed and the army's aggressiveness visibly improved, a fact proven in the battle of Ulanbutong. Ulanbutong refers to Hongshan in the southern part of today's Hexigten Banner, Inner Mongolia. It provided the passage between the hunting ground and North and South Desert Mongolia. In 1690, Gardan, chief of the Junggar tribe in West Desert Mongolia, waged a rebellion and led his troops to attack Ulanbutong. The Qing army, under the command of Tong Guogang and Tong Guowei (Kangxi's uncle on his mother's side), went to

1. Birch trees are the most prolific on the grassland. (by Li Rong)
2. The Army Horse Farm, established in 1965, occupies an area of 140 square kilometres that used to be included in the Mulan Hunting Ground. (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Bushes and grasses on the grassland in autumn. (by Li Rong)
4. Red leaves and frost. (by Chan Yat Nin)
5. Numerous lakes, called *paozi* in Mongolian, are scattered on the Bashang Grassland, providing drinking water supply for the herds. (by Wang Miao)



ward off the assault. During the battle, General Tong Guogang was killed and his death fired the wrath of his men who then inflicted heavy casualties on the invading enemy. Gardan fled with what little remained of his army to Hongshan. Then the Qing troops laid siege to Hongshan, compelling Gardan to send an envoy to the Qing barracks to plead for peace. Assuming that Gardan would surrender, the Qing troops lessened their vigilance, affording Gardan the opportunity to break through the siege and return to his home ground. Nevertheless, Gardan and his army found their status reduced by the battle, as the tribes in Qinghai, the Hui and Kazak people he had conquered, proclaimed their loyalty to the Qing court.

Celebrating His Birthday at the Hunting Ground

Beginning from 1681, Emperor Kangxi made a total of 51 northern trips, during which he went hunting 40 times. Though his father set high importance upon these excursions, Emperor Yongzheng, successor of Kangxi, never set foot on the Mulan Hunting Ground during his 13 years of rule from 1722 to 1735. Did he believe such a trip was unnecessary? If so, why, on his deathbed, did he enjoin his fourth son, later to become Emperor Qianlong, to carry on with the northern hunting trips? Perhaps he explained his plight when he remarked that it had been a mistake to not go to the Mountain Resort and make hunting trips, in spite of his busy schedule and his dislike for killing. He cautioned his progeny to follow in the footsteps of the previous emperor and not forget the family tradition of training troops at the Mulan Hunting Ground.

After Emperor Qianlong acceded to the throne, he carried out his father's behest and restored the practice of hunting in 1741, the sixth year of his rule. The imperial supervisor petitioned the emperor to oppose the decision, fearing that court officials and the army would wallow in the pleasure of the hunting trips. He also reasoned that the emperor's long absences from the capital would give the ministers staying behind a chance to neglect their duties. The emperor, however, immediately issued a decree reiterating the significance of the hunting trips. He reasoned that his grandfather, Emperor Kangxi, had waged several wars and won them all simply because his army had become well trained by participating in the drills during hunting season. Furthermore, the former emperor had learnt about the plight of the Mongolian tribes and given them assistance, winning their loyalty. After 20 years of not training during the hunting season, it was obvious that the army had weakened. If the situation continued, it might pose a great danger to the country's security. Emperor Qianlong could not let this continue. He further decreed that if any court official were found to be indulging himself and neglecting his duties, he would be punished without mercy. With this decree, Qianlong let it be known that his decision to restore the hunting trips was irreversible.

During his reign, Qianlong made a total of 40 hunting and drilling trips. In the beginning, he went every other year but he began to make it an annual event after 1751. Normally, he left the capital in June and did not return until October. The 13th day of the 8th month on the lunar calendar (normally middle or late September) was the emperor's birthday, one of the three major yearly festivals along with the New Year and the Winter Solstice (late December). On his early hunting trips, he hosted grand ceremonies to celebrate his birthday at the Mulan Hunting Ground and the feast would go on for several days. While the ministers, generals and dukes following him in the trip expressed their good wishes, officials staying in the capital also held a birthday party for him in the Forbidden City.

Qianlong's efforts to continue the hunting tradition brought in its wake an increased population flow to the Mulan Hunting Ground and provided an impetus for the region's growing economy. Great numbers of businessmen and craftsmen followed the troops to conduct business and even organise trade fairs near places where the hunting troops would make a stop. Problems, however, began to occur in the middle and later years of Qianlong's reign. Although most of the businessmen were honest, there were also thieves and swindlers. Protected by officers and men who guarded the hunting ground, they were able to smuggle out timber. Historical record shows that investigations conducted in 1766 found that over 3,000 trees had

been cut without authorisation. Random killings of animals also became serious with deer being the chief target. This meant that the hunting rules were not being strictly implemented and management of the hunting ground was weak, giving lawbreakers opportunities to carry out their schemes. Though Qianlong repeatedly had the rules improved and redrawn, corruption among court officials resulted in the increasingly severe destruction of the hunting ground's ecology and a decrease in the number of its animals.

Hunting Lost Its Glory in Protracted Wars

Qianlong, who had a passion for the grandiose, did not set a good example, as he spent without restraint and squandered huge sums hosting over-elaborate birthday celebrations. The Bashang region suffered large-scale tree felling and animal poaching. Ironically enough, apart from ordinary folk, the Qing court was also a great saboteur. From 1768 to 1774, Qianlong had 365,500 trees cut in three sub-hunting grounds in order to expand construction of the Mountain Resort and gardens in suburban Beijing. More absurdly, Qianlong issued a decree after the court carried out an extensive cutting of trees in 1776, saying those who refused to surrender after being found to have illegally hunted animals and felled trees would be punished for double crimes. Perhaps the emperor did not care for environmental protection but was only worried that there would be no more trees for the court to chop down.

During the reign of succeeding Emperor Jiaqing, generals and commanders embezzled money and revelled in luxury and pleasure, ignoring the needs of the soldiers. This resulted in the drastic fall of army morale. During his 25 years of rule, the emperor made 19 trips to the north but only entered the Mulan Hunting Ground 11 times. Hunting had to be called off because of rain, sickness, days for ritual ceremonies and depleted game. Insurgencies waged by the Miao people in Tongren of Guizhou and Yongsui of Hunan as well as the White Lotus Sect in Hubei, left the emperor with little enthusiasm for hunting. Even when he made a northern trip, his stay there was shortened to two months. The importance of the hunting trips came into doubt and the empire's decline began to manifest itself.

The next ruler, Emperor Daoguang, had visited the hunting ground 12 times with his grandfather, Qianlong, beginning from the year he was 10. After ascending to the throne, however, he never set foot on the charming grassland again. He did not even visit the Mountain Resort. This had to do with societal turbulence. He had to first deal with the uprising of the Hui people and then with the great influx of opium. Under the circumstances of dwindling national monetary reserves, to continue the hunting trips that cost large sums out of the national treasury would only arouse strong criticism for "wasting national financial resources and inflicting a burden on the people" and "neglecting court affairs". So he issued a ban on the hunting trips as of 1824 and the glory of the Mulan Hunting Ground vanished into history.

1. **An autumn scene of the Machinery Forest in Saihanba, where 400 million trees grow. (by Li Rong)**
2. **The residents of Bashang live a simple, self-sufficient life. (by Chang Cheng)**
3. **Sunning cabbages for the winter. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

Qing Emperors and the Mulan Hunting Ground

Kangxi (r.1662-1722) built the Mulan Hunting Ground and established the system for the hunting trips. He restored the grandeur of the army and won the loyalty of the Mongolian tribes, laying a solid foundation for a century of success and prosperity.

Yongzheng (r.1722-35) told his sons and grandsons to continue the tradition of training the army during the hunting season, although he had not been able to go himself.

Qianlong (r.1736-95) restored the practice of hunting, improved the management of the hunting ground and enlarged the scale of the hunts. In later years, he squandered resources and craved the grandiose, giving rise to ill practices in the court.

Jiaqing (r.1796-1820) carried on the tradition of hunting trips but could not stop the decline of the Mulan Hunting Ground, a result of worsening corruption among court officials.

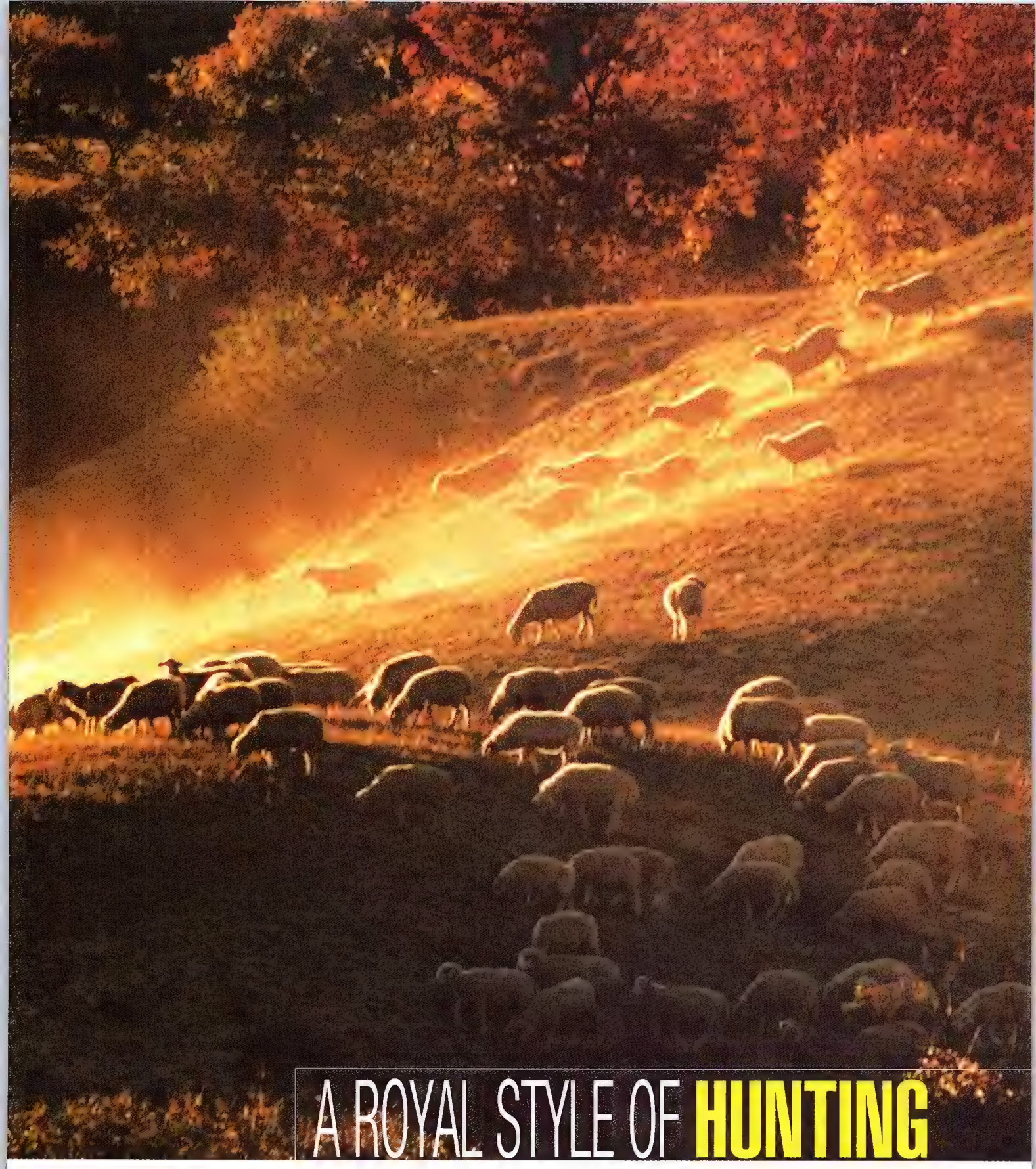
Daoguang (r.1821-50) was compelled to stop the hunting as he was beset by troubles in both domestic and foreign affairs.

Xianfeng (r.1851-61) was forced out of Beijing by the Allied Forces of the Eight Powers and fled to the Mountain Resort. He never visited the hunting ground.

Tongzhi (r.1862-74) agreed to "open up the land of the hunting ground to grow crops for the army", thus selling the Mulan Hunting Ground to solve economic difficulties.

Guangxu (r.1875-1908) opened up the entire Mulan Hunting Ground for reclamation, retaining the name "royal hunting ground" as an historical term.

Whenever emperors went hunting in autumn, thousands upon thousands of officials, generals and soldiers accompanied them. When the Mongolian tribes attended, the entire entourage numbered more than 30,000. These massive excursions required careful planning. Before hunting began, commanders on duty took their troops to inspect the northern route, establishing liaisons with local officials to build roads and bridges and asking them to prepare enough food. Meanwhile, orders were issued to garrison troops throughout the country to ask their commanders to select the most competent men to take part in the hunting and training.



A ROYAL STYLE OF HUNTING

Northern inspection tours also provided an opportunity for the eight-banner troops of the Qing Dynasty to demonstrate war preparedness to Mongolian tribes. A day before setting out, the emperor had the ministers offer sacrifices to his ancestors in the Forbidden City. The next day, all royal princes, dukes and court ministers staying behind on duty in the capital wore their official uniforms and knelt down to see the emperor off. In high spirits, the fully armed emperor left the capital accompanied by the band, the guards of honour, the vanguard battalion, the crack battalion, the magic shooter battalion and the tiger spear battalion. Heralded by colourful flags, the entire assemblage marched impressively, presenting a spectacular sight.

BASHANG: TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

1

In 1991, the grassland and forest area of Saihanba, part of Weichang County, was approved by the State Council to be a national scenic area covering 2,324 square kilometres. The area termed as Bashang lies across Zhangbei, Fengning and Weichang counties in Hebei Province. Therefore, it is divided up as Zhangbei Bashang, Fengning Bashang and Weichang Bashang.

Saihanba Scenic Area: A Land of Forest and Grassland

In the Qing Dynasty, the Mulan Hunting Ground (Weichang) covered 15,300 square kilometres, 14 times the size of Hong Kong. Later, the administrative areas were re-distributed, and the Mulan Hunting Ground was divided and merged with the counties of Longhua and Fengning, Hebei Province, and Duolun (Dolonnur) and Harqin of Inner Mongolia, respectively. The largest part of the original hunting ground was kept and renamed Weichang Manchu and Mongolian Autonomous County under the jurisdiction of Chengde City. By the end of 1990, Weichang County's actual area was 9,219 square kilometres. Its 509,000 inhabitants included 12 ethnic groups, 251,000 of them, or 50.9 percent of the county's total population, represent Manchurian, Mongolian, Hui, and other minority ethnic groups.

2

Saihanba in Weichang County was originally called "Saikandabahan", meaning "Beautiful Plateau" in Mongolian. Situated 200 km north of Chengde, Saihanba is where the Inner Mongolian Plateau meets the Hebei Plain. The land rises abruptly to form terraces. The Bashang (Upper Terrace) is between 1,500 to 2,000 metres above sea level. It is mostly hills and grassy marshland. The Lower Terrace, called Baxia, ranges from 1,100 to 1,500 metres above sea level. Saihanba is the extension of the Greater Hinggan Mountains, also a conjunction of the Yinshan Mountains and the Qilaotu Mountain. The mountains form a natural screen

against the cold winds from Siberia. The Luanhe and Chaohe rivers file through this area, making the place warm and moisture-laden. Hence, the climates of Bashang and Baxia are very different. Bashang has a plateau climate. Its annual average temperature is -0.3 to 3°C with a non-frost period of 80-90 days. Average accumulated snowfall is 17 cm. In summer, the mean temperature is 25°C. Winter is long and very cold, and the snow season lasts up to seven months.

The vegetation rate of the Saihanba Scenic Area is as high as 98 percent. The forest occupies one third of the total area; half is introduced and half is indigenous. Two-thirds of Saihanba is covered by grassland, of which weedy gradient and flatland each makes half. The main trees are larch and white birch. There are also Japanese black pine, Mongolian oak and mountain poplar, etc. Both the larch and white birch are fond of light and resistant to cold. Their timber is hard and durable, making them good building materials. Larch is also used to make sleepers to support railway tracks.

Rich Resources Savaged for Years

The vast grassland boasts more than 600 plants, including many species of medicinal herbs, such as golden lotus (nasturtium), Radix scutellariae, Rhizome of Chinese atractylodes, Chinese narrow-leaved polygala, dangsen (hairy asiabell), etc., and edible plants such as juecai (tender brake leaves), dahuang (rhubarb), yellow flowers, mushrooms, etc. Juecai is fleshy, tender and delicious, high in calcium, phosphorus, iron, and carotene. No wonder it is called "King of Wild Plants".

Bashang is also home to many animals such as roe deer, red deer, wild bear, Mongolian gazelle, pheasant, partridge and hare. The roe deer is about one metre long and usually lives on slopes or in woods. In winter, its coat is thick and brownish grey. In summer, it moults and turns chestnut red. The hide can be used for making blankets or leather. The red deer is usually 1.8 metres in length and as tall as 1.5 metres. The male grows antlers with as many as eight branches. In summer, the red deer lives on the mountain and in winter it moves to the foot of the mountain. Like the roe, its coat changes colour, too. Its red hair turns grey in winter. Its budding antlers, penis, bone and tail can all be used in traditional Chinese medicine. Because of this, they have become prime targets for hunting.

Bashang had been savaged by rampant tree felling and hunting. From 1768 to 1774, in order to expand the Mountain Resort in Chengde and the royal gardens in the suburbs of Beijing, a large number of trees were felled. In 1824, Emperor Daoguang stopped hunting; as a result, the Mulan Hunting Ground was neglected and became desolate. The Qing court of this period had to deal first with the Opium War and then the rebellion of the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace. So no one looked after the hunting ground. In 1863 (2nd year of Tongzhi's reign), the governor of Rehe petitioned the emperor to reclaim the land in the Mulan Hunting Ground. Emperor Tongzhi consented and some 53,00 hectares of wasteland at the edge of the Mulan Hunting Ground was leased to nearby peasants.

The Building of a Green Great Wall

3

4

By the year 1869, even land inside the Mulan Hunting Ground had been gradually taken over by peasants. At first, the Qing court took ruthless measures to drive them out, sometimes setting fire to their houses. To prevent the tilling of land within the hunting ground, a two-kilometre ditch was dug, but it was not effective. Farming went on for dozens of years. In 1904, war broke out between Russia and Japan. Once Japan took control of Inner Mongolia, it tried to advance southward. The Mulan Hunting Ground became a strategic place. The next year, the Qing court adopted a policy of guarding the border by reclaiming it. As a result, the already damaged Mulan was further depleted.

Finally, in 1962, the Chinese government began to rescue Saihanba from further deterioration. During 20 years of hard work, a non-native coniferous forest took root. Some 400 million trees have been planted. The restored royal hunting ground and its reinstated wildlife population now attract an increasing number of tourists.

In recent years, sandstorms often plagued Beijing in the spring. One reason is that some areas north of the capital have been affected by desertification. To further improve the ecology of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei, a decision was made to develop several forest farms along the line where the plain and the plateau meet in Fengning, Yudaokou of Chengde, and Zhangjiakou. It is estimated that each of the forest farms will cover 66,600 hectares of land. The project is divided into three phases. During the first phase (1999-2003), a total of 68,000 hectares of land will be forested. When the tree farms are complete, they will form a Green Great Wall together with the original Saihanba Forest Farm to stop sandstorms in Inner Mongolia from sweeping south.

Previous page: Sheep herds on the grassland in twilight. (by Xu Xiong)
1. The Army Horse Farm in winter. (by Yu Lei)
2. Frozen lakes in Saihanba waiting for the spring thaw. (by Guo Haisheng)
3. When the grassland is blanketed in snow, the sheep herds bring life to Saihanba. (by Dong Yanling)
4. Huamu Gully presents a cold beauty. (by Wang Demin)

MOUNTAIN RESORT: SUMMER PALACE OF QING EMPERORS

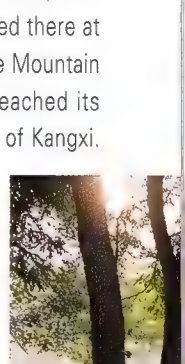
1

When you open a map of the city of Chengde, you inevitably notice the Mountain Resort in the upper part, because it takes up almost half of the urban district. Known in Chinese as Bishu Shanzhuang, or "Mountain Hamlet for Escaping the Heat", it occupies an area of 5.64 million square metres, eight times as big as the Forbidden City in Beijing. Many local scenic spots such as Qingchui Peak and Mount Jiguan are dwarfed by the huge imperial summer palace complex. Curious tourists are anxious to see what lies behind its protective walls, where the Qing emperors stayed to escape summer's high temperatures. It was listed as a World Cultural Heritage site in 1994.

Construction Took 89 Years

At the age of 20, Emperor Kangxi decided that every year he would make a tour to Weichang to hunt and drill his army. For such a trip, the number of attendants easily exceeded 10,000, and many horse-drawn carts were needed to carry goods for the excursion. Tents had to be erected along the way. It was a complicated and tedious journey, lasting two to three months. Naturally, the emperor also had to take care of state affairs during this period. After 22 years of this, he decided to find an appropriate place in which to build a palace to stay in while away from the capital. Finally he chose Rehe (present day Chengde), which was conveniently linked to the Central Plains, the Northeast, Inner Mongolia and the area now known as Mongolia. It was also reasonably close to the capital; a fast horse could reach Beijing in one day. So in the year of 1702 (41st year of Kangxi's reign), the building of Bishu Shanzhuang began. It took 89 years, spanning three generations of Qing emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, to complete.

A place of great significance, the Mountain Resort witnessed the rise and fall of the Qing Empire. After its completion, four emperors, Kangxi, Qianlong, Jiaqing and Xianfeng, resided there at times. It was Emperor Kangxi who buoyantly entered the Mountain Resort to inaugurate its use as a summer palace. It reached its heyday during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, grandson of Kangxi. During his almost six decades of rule, he stayed there for 22 years. Chengde truly became a second capital. When Jiaqing ascended the throne, the Qing Empire was in decline. After he died in 1820 in the Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves, no Qing emperor went there for 40 years. It was a difficult time for the country. The court was corrupt, the army was large but lacked discipline, and the country was riddled with both foreign and domestic troubles. The annual hunting tours were abolished, and the Mountain Resort neglected.



It was not until 1860, when the joint armies of Britain and France attacked Beijing, that Emperor Xianfeng and Empress Dowager Cixi fled to Chengde and later approved the notorious Beijing Treaty there. The next year, like his grandfather, Xianfeng died in the Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves. Subsequent emperors Tongzhi, Guangxu and Xuantong never visited Chengde. The Mountain Resort and the Mulan Hunting Ground, fell into desolation.

Imperial Magnificence in Reformed Architectural Styles

Gifted architects, in their profound wisdom, divided the Mountain Resort into four parts, each harmonising with the surrounding topography, and subtly blended buildings and gardens in some of the finest scenery in China. The palace area, for example, was strict in composition, suggesting the imperial ambience. The lake area resembles a view in the Yangtse River Delta, while the plain reminds one of the lush growth and seeming infinity of the Mongolian grassland. The mountainous area with gullies and peaks presents a miniature version of the plateaus in China's Northeast and Northwest.

A model of royal palace and gardens, the beauty of the Mountain Resort is very different from that of buildings and gardens in other parts of the country. As a second imperial palace, the Mountain Resort sticks to tradition where architecture is concerned. In the Central Palace built by Emperor Kangxi or the East Palace built by Emperor Qianlong, the so-called "supreme nine" concept of royal architecture is carefully followed. On the axis of the Central Palace are the Tanbo Jincheng (Tranquillity and Reverence) Hall, the Sizhi Shuwu (Four Wisdoms Study), the Wansui Zhaofang (Longevity Chamber), the Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves, and the Yunshan Shengdi (Blissful Clouds and Mountains) Tower. From Lizheng Gate to Xiuyun Gate, there are nine separate compounds with buildings laid out in symmetrical patterns. All are stately, projecting a strong regal atmosphere.

Most noticeably, the pigments traditionally used for imperial palaces were not adopted for these structures. Even the decorative components of the buildings are painted iron oxide red instead of vermilion or light vermilion. However, even this colour is not extravagantly used, with the accent on blue, green, ochre, grey, white and black. There are no yellow glazed tiles for the roof, nor crimson gate or wall. Furniture is made of red sandalwood, nanmu, or other precious wood, with a dark or warm tone. There are no gaudy or ornate objects. Only some horizontal plaques carrying instructive mottoes hang on the walls here and there. The whole place looks austere and quiet. The trappings and character of the palace were deliberately toned down to blend in with the surrounding nature, but still bear an imperial air.

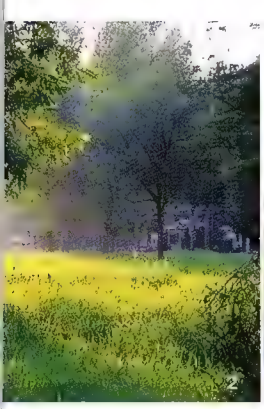
The Charm of the Lake Area Dispels Political Tension

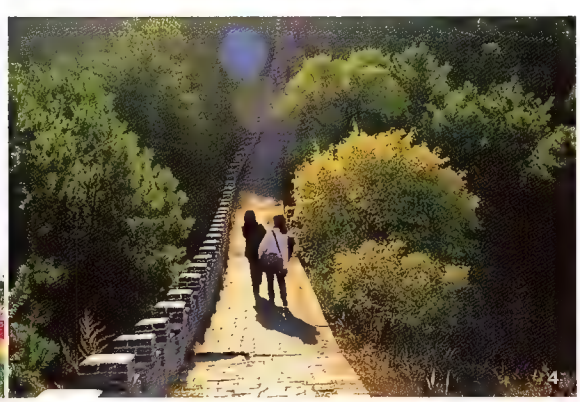
In 1708 (47th year of Kangxi's reign), Emperor Kangxi anxiously set foot on the Mountain Resort to see the first phase of construction. By then, only Pleasure Islet (Ruyizhou), Yuese Jiangsheng (Moonlight and River Sound) Islet and Huanbi (Round Wall) Islet were built. It seemed the emperor was spellbound by the lake scenery of the Yangtse River Delta and endeavoured to make it reappear in the north. Gradually, nine lakes of differing shapes were created: Mirror Lake, Silver Lake, Upper Lake, Lower Lake, Purity Lake, Pleasure Lake, Inner Lake or West Lake, Long Lake and Crescent Moon Lake. Together, they are called Border Lake (Saihu), and on those lakes are 10 beautiful islets. The charm of the lake scenery dispelled any political tension at the imperial palace.

Emperor Kangxi and Emperor Qianlong named 72 spots in the Mountain Resort, and 23 were named in connection with water, of which 15 were in the lake area. Obviously, the best scenic spots are here. When Qianlong first visited the Mountain Resort, he was so impressed by the lake area that he wrote a poem:

Filling the lake are water chestnut and its blossoms,
A sweet smell stirred up by the wind breezing in through the valley.
Why bother going south to find scenery?
Just look at the wonderland of water and clouds in the north.

1. The Golden Hill and the pavilion of the same name were built in imitation of the Golden Hill Temple in Zhenjiang. (by Yu Lei)
2. The Plain Area presents the scenery on the Inner Mongolian grasslands. (by Tsang Po Ki)
3. The Yongyou Temple and the Sarira Pagoda found in the Plain Area. (by Tsang Po Ki)
4. The wall circling the Mountain Resort was built with money paid by Ge Li, the governor of Jiangxi, a punishment exacted by Emperor Kangxi for his corruption. (by Chan Yat Nin)





Both emperors regarded the lake area as being as beautiful as the water country of the Yangtse River Delta. This successful "reproduction" was the work of ingenious designers. They skilfully channelled water from the Rehe Spring, the Wulie River, brooks in the northwest of the Mountain Resort and snow-melted water from the surrounding mountains to the lake area through hidden tunnels. No wonder the waters in Border Lake are so abundant and clear year round.

They erected pavilions, towers and terraces on the islets, and small bridges and long causeways over the lakes. These include: Zhijingyun Causeway, an imitation of the Su Causeway and Bai Causeway at West Lake in Hangzhou; the Fish Watching Rock Terrace (Shiji Guanyu), copying the Yanziling Angler Terrace on the Fuchun River in Zhejiang; the Misty Building (Yanyu Lou) on Green Water Lily Islet (Qinglian Dao), imitating the same named place in Jiaxing; the Landing for Gathering Water Chestnut (Cailingdu) on Huanbi Islet, after the Zhenyuan Garden in Shaoxing; the Golden Hill (Jinshan) to the east of Pleasure Islet, resembling the Golden Hill Temple in Zhenjiang; and, Canglangyu, an imitation of the Canglong Pavilion Garden in Suzhou, to name several. Water cheerfully meandered through the Mountain Resort and created a water land like those of the south upon which Kangxi and Qianlong feasted their eyes and eased their nostalgia for the faraway Yangtse River Delta. Here they enjoyed a peaceful, quiet life.

The Plain Area: For the Show of Military Power

After Emperor Qianlong resumed the royal hunting trips and visits to the Mountain Resort, he implemented more projects. Apart from continuous construction in the palace and lake areas, he decided to expand the Plain Area, which resembled a Mongolian steppe. The central scenic spot in this area was the Wanshu (Ten-thousand Tree) Garden, where Emperor Qianlong received heads of minority tribes, religious leaders, etc. Near the garden, large tents were put up which were big enough to host banquets for more than 1,000 people. Wide horse tracks were built to test horses from all over the country. The best were chosen for the emperor to ride when hunting. The Ten-thousand Tree Garden did not serve merely as a recreational centre. It was also a key to the emperor's wish to unify the whole country. Here, Manchu military power was demonstrated and the emperor met with chiefs of various Mongolian tribes, trying to earn their trust. Despite his efforts to be closer to his officials and tribal chiefs, however, he could not camouflage his arbitrary nature.

Thick grasses were the outstanding feature of the place and won Emperor Qianlong's admiration. He used the phrase "verdant carpet" to describe the grassland, about which he composed eight poems that were engraved on eight stone steles. The grassland is vibrant all year because it teems with brilliant wild lily, wild peony, azalea, bauhinia, morningstar lily, forget-me-not, cornel, etc. There are all kinds of trees, too, such as the Chinese scholartree and elm tree. The leaves take on different colours in each season. The appearance of the place continually changes, thanks to its elaborate arrangement, giving visitors a new impression every time they see it.

Rustic Beauty of the Mountain Resort

Northwest of the Mountain Resort is the mountainous area, which takes up four-fifths of the resort's total area. Covered with dense forest and numerous gullies, this area has three travel routes. The one in the north is Songyunxia (Pine and Cloud Gorge), the middle one goes through two valleys Lishuyu (Pear Tree Valley) and Songlinyu (Pine Forest Valley), and the south one is also made up of two valleys known as Zhenziyu (Hazelnut Valley) and Xiyu (Western Valley). Countless trees of pine, oriental white oak, cypress, maple, etc., not only enrich the scenery but also add rustic beauty to the Mountain Resort. It reminds one that the landscape of the Mountain Resort is genuine. This is an imperial palace well blended with nature. Situated at the foot of mountains, the Mountain Resort lives up to its name.

The Mountain Area was developed during the reign of Kangxi and expanded by Qianlong. Though the topography was complicated, structures were built to complement the terrain. Large buildings stand on great tracts of flat land in the valley. Pavilions are erected on relatively steep slopes. Care has been taken not to destroy the natural terrain and environment to preserve the primitive look of the place. The areas depleted are covered up with man-made rockeries. This is perhaps the practice that Emperor Qianlong called "to extend nature by nature". This concept is best reflected in the Shuiyue (Water and Moon) Nunnery, the Shanjin (Mountainside) Pavilion, and the Yizhao (Pleasant Light) Study.

Travelling Routes in the Mountain Resort

It is not easy to tour the vast Mountain Resort area. To save time, map out a route before setting off.

1. Palace Area: Including these four structures, the Central Palace,

the Hall of Pine and Crane (Songhe Zhai), the Wanhe Songfeng (Wind Pine Valley) Palace, and the East Palace. Of these, the Central Palace and the East Palace each comprises a cluster of buildings. The route takes two hours. The key place to see is the Central Palace.

Central Palace: Lizheng Gate ➔ Wumen Gate ➔ Gate to the Mountain Resort ➔ Hall of Tranquillity and Reverence ➔ Four Wisdoms Study ➔ Longevity Chamber ➔ Hall of Refreshing Mists and Waves ➔ Blissful Clouds and Mountains

East Palace: Dehui Gate ➔ Qingyin Tower ➔ Hall of Diligence ➔ Juan'ah Blissful Land

2. **Lake Area:** North of the palace, covering 57 hectares including a water area of 29 hectares, and 28 hectares of islets and causeways. There are three travelling routes, each taking two to three hours. If you choose only one, the middle one is recommended, because 12 of the 72 scenic spots named by Kangxi or Qianlong are situated on Pleasure Islet on this route.

Middle route: (exit the Wanhe Songfeng and turn right) Zhijingyun Causeway ➔ Landing for Gathering Water Chestnut ➔ Pleasure Islet (the best part) ➔ Green Water Lily Islet (ending at the Hall of Mists and Rains on the islet)

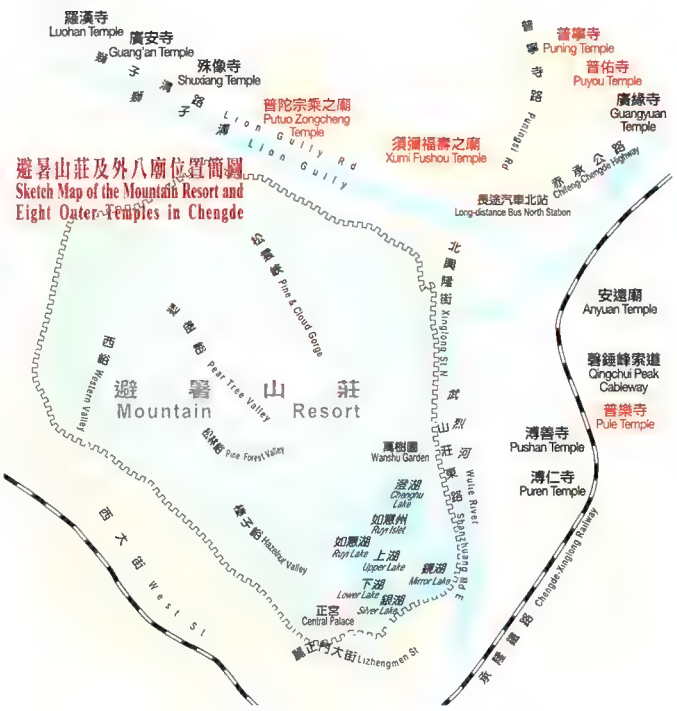
Eastern route: (enter Dehui Gate, pass East Palace, start from the Juan'ah Shengjing) Shuixin Pavilion-Wenyuan Garden ➔ Qingshu Shanguan ➔ Yuese Jiangsheng Islet ➔ Jiede Hall ➔ Huiwan Zongchun Temple ➔ Xinsuo House ➔ Golden Hill (the best part) ➔ Xiangyuan Yiqing ➔ Rehe Spring

Western route: (exit the Yunshan Shengjing in the Central Palace, go down the Yulingpo, heading north) Ruyi Lake ➔ Fangyuan House ➔ Fangzhu Linliu ➔ Linfang Villa ➔ Yuanjin Quansheng ➔ Wenjin Tower

3. **Plains Area:** North of the lake area, covering 53 hectares; the tour of this area takes at least one day.

Shuiliu Yunzai ➔ Haopu Jianxiang ➔ Yingzhuan Qiaomu ➔ Putian Congyue ➔ Pingxiang Pool ➔ Fine Spring Chamber ➔ Nuanliu Xuanbo ➔ Ten-thousand Tree Garden ➔Horse Trial Field ➔ Yongyou Temple ➔Sarira Pagoda

4. **Mountain Area:** comprising 422 hectares with over 40 scenic spots; two to three days of touring; take enough drinking water and food; wear trainers to climb on the mountains; avoid travelling alone.



1. Renting a sledge for five yuan an hour, you can enjoy yourself on the snow ground. (by Laurence Cheung)
2. The scenic spot bearing the inscription of Emperor Kangxi, Shuiliu Yunzai (Water Flows and Clouds Linger) (by Yu Lei)
3. Wenjin'ge was built in imitation of the ancient library, Tianyige, in Ningbo. (by Yang Haitao)

A TOUR OF THE EIGHT OUTER TEMPLES

The Eight Outer Temples refer to the temples built outside the Mountain Resort on the orders of Emperor Kangxi and Emperor Qianlong. Each temple's location, scale and form were decided by the reigning emperor. The architectural designs for the temples were carefully considered so as to complement and supplement the Mountain Resort. While the plain-looking palace was a temporary lodging for the emperor when he went hunting or on inspection tours of north China, the gorgeous temples were where the heads of Mongolian and other minority tribes worshipped their gods. A comparison of the two different styles reveals the emperor's intention to show respect for divinity and to win over ethnic peoples. The ingenious arrangement of the Eight Outer Temples surrounding the Mountain Resort reflects the emperor's aspiration to create a unified country, obedient under his rule.

Anxious for Universal Peace

The Puning (Universal Tranquillity) Temple built in 1755 was the first temple constructed by the order of Emperor Qianlong. It marked the suppression of a rebellion by the Junggar army commanded by Dawaqi. Thus, the threat that had hung over the northwest for 400 years ended. Emperor Qianlong had long been anxious to have a peaceful empire. This is seen in one of his inscriptions engraved on a stone stele. Its final lines read: "The reason it is named Puning is that I sincerely wish that people in the snowy mountains of Xihai or the remote, sandy land by the Henghe River will live in peace and prosperity, a universal, eternal peace."

The architecture of this temple is a combination of the Han and Tibetan styles, the front of the temple being of Han style and the back of Tibetan style. Its principal structure, the Mahayana Hall, houses a

22.28-metre high, gold-foil covered statue of the Thousand Hand and Thousand Eye Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy). In reality, the statue has 42 hands, each of which has an eye. As each hand represents 25 specific virtues, people believe the goddess has altogether 1,000 hands and the same number of eyes. This is the largest wooden Buddha statue in the world. Weighing 110 tons, it was carved out of 120 cubic metres of timber. From each corner of this hall extends a rather large terraced hall built on two overlapping white terraces, symbolising the so-called "four big continents and eight small continents in the universe". A pagoda, square at the bottom and vase-shaped on the top, stands on each of the four sides of the hall. There is also a rectangular white terrace, representing the Sun and the Moon respectively, to its eastern and western sides.

From the top of the Mahayana Hall, one can see a small temple standing beside the Puning Temple. It is the Puyou (Universal Protection) Temple, a Buddhist academy, built five years later. At that time, a number of lamas resided in the Puren (Universal Benevolence) Temple, the Pushan (Universal Kindness) Temple and the Temple of Universal Tranquillity. In order to strengthen relations with Mongolians and Tibetans via religion and to provide the lamas with more education, the Qing court built this small temple, also known as the Scripture School, where sutras of the Esoteric and Theravada sects, as well as mathematics and medicine were taught. Unfortunately, its principal structure, the Dharmacakra Hall, was seriously damaged by lightning in 1964. Today only some annex buildings remain.

Tips: Two hours are recommended to explore the Temple of Universal Tranquillity. Admission: 30 yuan, plus 1 yuan for insurance. Temple of Universal Protection: 10 yuan (not much to see). From downtown or the Mountain Resort, take Bus No. 6 or 15 to the Dafosi stop. Local people call the Puning Temple "Dafosi" (Great Buddha Temple). From the Pule Temple, the Putuo Zongsheng Temple or the Xumi Fushou (Sumeru Happiness and Longevity), it's best to take a taxi. The fare is 5 yuan.

Temple of Universal Joy: Imitation of the Heavenly Temple

Pule (Universal Joy) Temple was specifically designed to welcome chiefs of the Kazak and Bulute tribes under the Mongol rule, who pledged allegiance to the Qing court. Likewise, it emphasised the Qing Empire's equal treatment of all tribes, just as the Anyuan Temple was built two years earlier to mark the occasion when the Dashidawa tribe of the Junggar tribe surrendered and vowed loyalty to the Qing court. In essence, it was a way to win over their hearts. Both the Kazak and Bulute peoples were Muslim. In building this Buddhist temple, the Qing emperor did not want them to convert their faith, but simply meant to show how powerful his empire was. In a stone stele inscription, Qianlong wrote, "On each autumn inspection trip to the

1. Pule (Universal Joy) Temple built to welcome the tribal chiefs of Kazak and Bulute. (by Yu Lei)
2. The Mandra Hall in Puning (Universal Tranquillity); its ceiling symbolises the Sumeru, the centre of the Buddhist world. (by Yu Lei)
3. Putuo Zongcheng Temple, in Tibetan style, is built on a mountain slope. (by Ela Tam)

Mountain Resort, Kazak chiefs come one after another to pay homage, as do visitors from the newly surrendered Duerbote, Kazak on the left and right, Bulute in the east and west. It makes them respectful and pious, satisfies their wishes and dispels thoughts of rebellion."

Construction of the Pule Temple was begun in the first month of 1766 and completed in the eighth month of 1767. Among the Eight Outer Temples, this one, in the Chinese style, is the smallest. However, the principal structure, known as Shecheng, or Mandra City, an imitation of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, makes the temple unique. This structure is symbolic of Mount Sumeru, the centre of the universe according to Buddhism. On its top stands the Xuguang (Dawn Light) Pavilion. Its golden and wooden pillars, 12 of each, hold up the eaves, forming an inner and outer circle. The ceiling displays a carved dragon and phoenix pattern. It comprises three layers, each growing smaller towards the centre, with meticulous and refined carvings. In the centre of the hall, a huge wooden platform supports a bronze statue of the double-body Buddha, known as the Joyful Buddha.

Tips: Admission to this temple: 20 yuan. Take Bus No. 10 and allow yourself at least an hour and a half for your visit. From here, you may go on to the nearby Anyuan Temple or the Puren Temple, or take a cable car to Qinghui Peak.

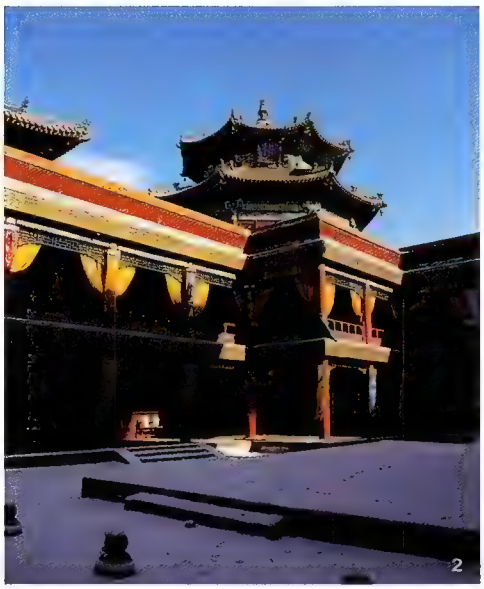
The Expansive Temple of Potaraka Doctrine

Of the Eight Outer Temples, the Temple of Potaraka Doctrine (Putuo Zongcheng), covering 216,000 square metres, is the largest. The year 1770 (35th year of Qianlong's reign) marked the 60th birthday of Emperor Qianlong and his mother's 80th birthday. So it became a national celebration. Naturally, great numbers of visitors from the tribes in present-day Inner Mongolia, Qinghai and Xinjiang came with their congratulations. Emperor Qianlong had this temple built three years ahead of the celebration, so they could practise Tibetan Buddhism. To facilitate this large-scale project, the court requisitioned more than 1,000 vehicles, transporting 700,000 bricks from Beijing to Rehe. Unfortunately, the temple caught fire just before it was finished, delaying completion for one year.

The Temple of Potaraka Doctrine resembles Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet. It forgoes the customary symmetry and is divided into front and back parts. Buildings lie following the contour, ascending the hill slope, with the Red Terrace at the top. The Five-Stupa Gate is one of the most eye-catching structures. Stupas of red, green, yellow, white and black respectively stand in a neat row, representing five major Buddhist sects. Beneath the stupas, at the foot of the terrace, are three arched gates. The design means that anyone passing through the gate is paying homage to all sects of Buddhism. Another attraction, the White Terraces, has more than 30 white terraces in a cluster, each of them representing a different function. All flat-topped, they are bastion-houses in Tibetan style. The terraces are in different shapes, square, trapezoidal, carpenter's square, etc., and the arrangements within the houses are ingenious, including a Han Chinese courtyard and halls.

For Tibetans, white symbolises auspiciousness while red is a

symbol of power. Therefore, the Red Terrace was not open to the public. Only the emperor, a few high lamas, tribal leaders and princes could enter. Even high-ranking court officials of the first or second grades were not allowed entrance and could only watch from beyond the glazed-tile archway. The Red Terrace is 25 metres tall, majestic and awe-inspiring. On the building's facade facing south, six niches of glazed tiles run top to bottom. Its six rows of upper windows are all Tibetan-style, trapezium-shaped, leaving only those in the bottom row in square-shaped Han Chinese style.



Within the high red walls, sits the main hall, the Wanfa Guiyi (All Laws Belonging to One) Hall, roofed by gilded bronze tiles. It was the site for important religious gatherings and celebrations. An enamel pagoda, eight treasures of Buddhist ritual instruments and two Longevity Pagodas made of red sandalwood are housed there. According to historical records, after Obaxi, head of the Turhute tribe, led his 169,000 people out of Russia, travelled to Ili in Xinjiang and pledged allegiance to the Qing court, Emperor Qianlong was deeply touched by their earnestness and willpower, especially when he heard about the enormous difficulties on their way, in which half of their number died. When Obaxi reached Chengde, Emperor Qianlong held a grand ceremony to welcome him in the Hall of All Laws Belonging to One. He also had two stone tablets erected in honour of the event. The emperor's actions moved Obaxi to tears.

The Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity

Ten years later, when Emperor Qianlong turned 70, the Sixth Panchen Erdini led some 2,000 people to Beijing from Xigazê to offer their good wishes. Qianlong was delighted and regarded it as a significant sign of the prosperity of the Qing Empire. He suddenly recalled that his great grandfather, Emperor Shunzhi, had built the West Yellow Temple for the Fifth Panchen Lama who had come to Beijing to see him. Immediately, he ordered a lamasery in imitation of the Tashilunpo Temple, the Panchen Lama's palace in Xigazê, to be built. He named it the Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity. He then began to learn the Tibetan language in order to converse with the Panchen Lama in his native tongue.

The Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity is one-third the size of the Temple of Potaraka Doctrine. Divided into three parts, its front section comprises the entrance gate, the Stele Pavilion, and the Glazed-tile Archway. The central part includes the Red Terrace, Ingenious and Majestic Hall and the Auspicious Hall, while the back section contains the Golden Greeting Hall, the Hall of Origin of All Laws and the Glazed-tile Pagoda. The roof of the Ingenious and Majestic Hall is covered with gilded bronze tiles and decorated with eight golden dragons. Statues of Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and Sakyamuni are worshipped there. It was here that Emperor Qianlong attended six lectures given by the Sixth Panchen Lama and received his blessings. The Panchen also gave Emperor Qianlong a record of the prayers he said for him on his way from Tibet to Rehe. The emperor was pleased and presented a gift to the Panchen immediately. The Auspicious Hall with its golden top served as lodgings for the Panchen. Some 15,000 taels of gold were used for its construction.

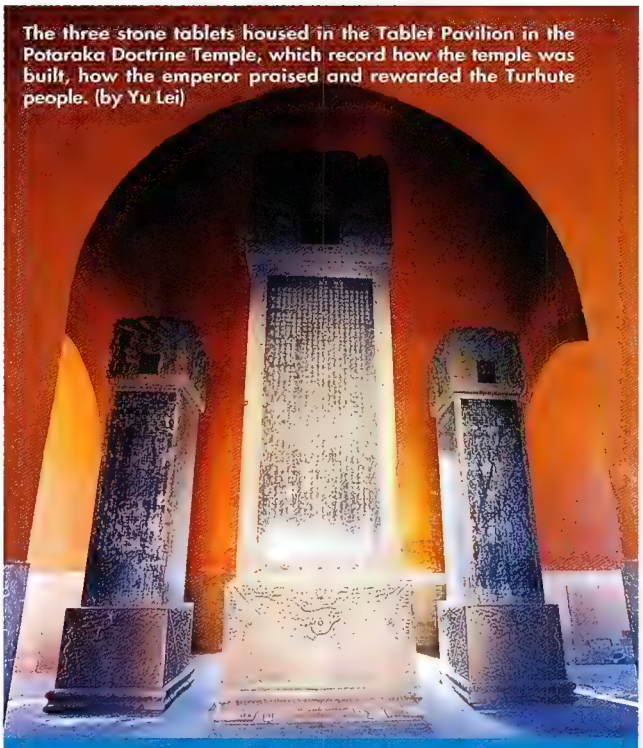
This temple was the last of the Eight Outer Temples to be built. In it, Han and Tibetan architectural styles are better combined. As opposed to the Temple of Potaraka Doctrine, more Han Chinese building techniques have been adopted, as seen in the axis of the complex, the gate lintel, stele pavilion, pagoda, etc. While the tops of the buildings with golden pinnacles reflect Tibetan style, the roof ridges display Han architectural features.

The Eight Outer Temples make up a splendid architectural masterpiece, in the style of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Tibet and Uygur. They are not only magnificent but also practical and functional. Unfortunately, the amounts spent on them were extravagant, causing financial strain during the later years of Qianlong's reign. The gilded bronze roof tiles on the Temple of Potaraka Doctrine and the Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity alone used 30,000 taels of gold. Additionally, maintenance of those structures was also costly, another burden on the court and the populace. As large quantities of timber were needed for construction, savage felling of trees in the Mulan Hunting Ground seriously damaged local ecology. It's beyond imagination what kind of miseries the masses of labourers had to go through.

Tips: The Temple of Potaraka Doctrine and the Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity can be toured in one route, which takes three or four hours. There are fewer visitors in the afternoon, providing you with the chance to admire the numerous cultural relics. A ticket for the above two plus the Pule and Anyuan temples costs 50 yuan.

Translated by F. Huang, M. J. Wang

1. The Miaogao Zhuangyan Hall of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity Temple, where Emperor Kangxi listened to six lectures given by the Sixth Panchen Lama. (by Yu Lei)
2. The roof of the magnificent Potaraka Doctrine Temple is covered by gilded bronze tiles. (by Yu Lei)



The three stone tablets housed in the Tablet Pavilion in the Potaraka Doctrine Temple, which record how the temple was built, how the emperor praised and rewarded the Turhute people. (by Yu Lei)

Temples That Are Not Forgotten

From 1713 to 1780, 12 temples were built in Chengde. The term Eight Outer Temples came from the eight barracks assigned to administrate these temples. Apart from the ones mentioned above, the others are either seriously damaged or have become run-down.

The Temples of Puren (Universal Benevolence) and Pushan (Universal Kindness): The first two of the Eight Outer Temples, both destroyed; only the former has been rebuilt. In 1713, the Qing troops suppressed an insurrection led by Mongolian separatist Gardan. As it was also Kangxi's 60th birthday, many Mongolian tribal chiefs came to congratulate him, so the emperor ordered the building of the two temples for the celebrations.

Anyuan (Border Peace) Temple: Built in 1764, it was an imitation of the Kurzha Temple on the Ili River in Xinjiang. It was prepared for the Dashidawa people who came to Beijing to pledge loyalty to the Qing Empire. It remains intact today. A rectangular compound with three rows of houses, its main building, the Pudu Hall, is a three-storey structure, though it appears to have four floors. The murals used to cover the interior walls have long been destroyed.

Arhat Hall: This Han-style hall no longer exits. It was built in 1764, after Emperor Qianlong was deeply impressed by the Arhat Hall in Anguo Temple in Haining, Zhejiang, during an inspection tour there.

Guang'an (Boundless Peace) Temple: It was built in 1772 for the 80th birthday of the emperor's mother. Mongolian chiefs came with their good wishes, so Emperor Qianlong ordered a temple built in the Tibetan style. It no longer exists.

Shuxiang (Manjusri) Temple: This temple resembles a temple with the same name in the Wutai Mountains. It still exists in a dilapidated state. Built in 1774, it is in the Han architectural style. Among its unique features are the large-scale rockeries in its courtyard.

Guangyuan (Broad Friendship): A Han-style structure, it was built in 1780 and served as the residence of the Living Buddha Nuomenhan, scripture tutor to Emperor Qianlong. It remains but is run-down. (As it was built with donations from lamas, many do not regard it as part of the Eight Outer Temples).

TRAVEL TIPS FOR CHENGDE AND BASHANG

Transport

To Beijing

Flights: Since there are no direct flights to Chengde, we suggest that travellers fly to Beijing or Tianjin first. Please refer to details of relevant flight schedules in the "Executive's Memo" on page 86.

Beijing→Chengde

Train	Departure	Arrival
Y709	7:20	11:18
7155	6:58	14:18
2251	13:22	18:22
2189	16:32	21:40
7153	16:28	23:16

(Fare: 41 yuan. There are more trains from Beijing to Chengde.)

There are buses going directly to Chengde every half hour from the Beijing Xizhimen Long-distance Bus Station. The service runs from 06:00-16:00.

Beijing→Weichang

Train: Take train No. 2559 departing at 21:33 from the Beijing South Railway Station and arriving at the Siheyong Railway Station at 4:00 next morning. Ticket: 25 yuan. Then take a bus from Siheyong to Weichang. Ticket: 4 yuan. Bus: Board a bus to Weichang at the Xizhimen Long-distance Bus Station. Ticket: 40-50 yuan. Duration: 6-9 hours. Service is frequent.

Chengde→Weichang

Bus: Take a bus directly to Weichang from the Chengde Bus Station; service is frequent. Ticket: 22.5 yuan; Duration: 4-5 hours. Or take a train to Siheyong, then change to a bus to Weichang; 4 yuan.

Tips: If time is limited, consider going directly to the Army Horse Farm by hired car from Siheyong. You may have to pass up the Saihanba Forest Park (Admission: 50 yuan), located about 85 km from Weichang, on the way while those taking a bus need not do so. Car hire fare depends on vehicle size. A jeep is the best means of transport and costs 2 yuan/km, about 200-400 yuan for the whole trip.

Weichang→Machinery Forest Farm→Army Horse Farm

Buses run to Jixie Linchang (Machinery Forest Farm) from the Weichang Bus Station. The earliest service is at 5:30, with buses leaving every half hour. Ticket: 12 yuan; Duration: 3-4 hours. On arrival in the Machinery Forest Farm, hire a car to the Army Horse Farm. Fare: 100-150 yuan; Duration: 30-45 minutes. Or, take the bus which leaves daily at 11:30 from the Machinery Forest Farm to the Army Horse Farm. Fare: 5 yuan.

Tips: Two buses run between Weichang and the Army Horse Farm. One leaves Weichang at about 10:00; the other bus goes from the Army Horse Farm to Weichang at about 7:00. Fare: 17 yuan.

Accommodation

Chengde

Travellers can stay outside or inside the Mountain Resort. Those staying inside have their admission fees waived and can visit the resort freely. You are advised to book hotels in advance for the peak travel period of July and August.

The Red Terrace of the Temple of Potaraka Doctrine. (by Yu Lei)

Exquisite relief of a temple. (by Tsang Po Ki)

Qingchui Peak, an emblem of Chengde. (by Yu Lei)

Hotels Inside the Chengde Mountain Resort

Ligong Hotel

Add: Wanshu Garden, Chengde Mountain Resort; Tel: (314) 2163375 / 2163014; Rate: 60-130 yuan/bed in one-storey flat; 300-800 yuan/room in villa.

Mongolian Yurt Holiday Village

Add: At the foot of Nanshan Mountain, inside the Chengde Mountain Resort; Tel: (314) 2163094 / 2162269; Rate: 40-45 yuan/bed; 230-650 yuan/suite.

Hotels Outside the Chengde Mountain Resort

Yunshan Hotel***

Add: 6 Nanyuan Road E; Tel: (314) 2156171 / 2156172;
Rate: 440-2,000 yuan/room (low season); 500-2,800/room (peak season).

Xinhua Hotel**

Add: 4 Xinhua Road N; Tel: (314) 2063181 / 2065880.

Chengde Hotel**

Add: 33 Nanyingzi Street; Tel: (314) 2023157 / 2022551.

Army Horse Farm

Streets in the Army Horse Farm are not named, but all the locals know the location of each hotel.

Kanghong Hotel (west of the Hongshan Army Horse Farm)
Tel: (314) 7680035; Mobile: 1331078538

Mingren Villa: Tel: (314) 7680007; Mobile: 13810739011

Hongshan Hotel: 30 yuan/bed

Laoxiangjia: 20 yuan/bed

Longxiang Hotel: 20-40/bed

Machinery Forest Farm

Red Moon Resort: Tel: (314) 7802661; Mobile: 13903242358

Hongshan Hotel: Tel: (314) 7515927; Mobile: 138314866661

Admission Fees

Chengde Mountain Resort: 30 yuan (low season); 50 yuan (peak season); **Puning Temple:** 30 yuan; **Temples of Puyou and Anyuan:** 10 yuan each; **Temples of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity, Pule and Putuo Zongsheng:** 20 yuan each; Package ticket for all the above temples except Puning: 50 yuan; **Saihanba Forest Park:** 30 yuan.

Travel Facilities in Bashang

Hiring a car: It is necessary to hire a car to tour Bashang. Going with companions will save money. Most hotels can arrange this for you. Fare depends on the season and traffic situation. Usually it costs 200-300 per day.

Riding a horse: It costs 10-20 yuan to make a circuit of General's Lake on horseback. A full day costs 60-80 yuan.

Best Travel Season

Bashang: Spring lasts from May to July, when wild flowers blossom on the grassland. Summer is from July to September. Temperatures rise to about 25°C, and rapeseed and wild flowers are seen everywhere. However, the best travel period is from late September to early October, when the autumn leaves turn golden.

Tips: The average altitude of Bashang is 1,500-2,000 metres above sea level. There is a big temperature difference from day to night, so take a jacket even in summer. It will be very cool by late October, and temperatures can drop to -20°C in December.

The Chengde Mountain Resort is not a good place to escape the summer heat, as its summer weather is similar to that of Beijing. For staying in the resort, you are suggested to go in late autumn or early winter. The place is more enchanting in winter, and there are usually far fewer travellers.

Eight-day Tour to Beijing, Chengde, and Bashang

Day 1: Fly to Beijing and stay in a hotel near the railway station. Stroll Wangfujing and Qianmen streets at night.

Day 2: Visit the Forbidden City and Tian'anmen Square in the morning. Go to the Drum Tower and traditional Beijing hutongs (lanes) in the afternoon. Take a train to Siheyong that night.

Day 3: On arrival in Siheyong at dawn, hire a car to the Army Horse Farm; make a stop at the Machinery Forest Farm if you want.

Day 4: Hire a car to tour around the horse farm, visiting scenic spots such as Lama Hill, Huamu Gully, General's Lake, Taifeng Lake, Seven-star Lake and Moon Lake.

Day 5: Drive back to Weichang and take a bus to Chengde. Stay in the Mountain Resort.

Day 6: Tour the Mountain Resort and the Eight Outer Temples.

Day 7: Take a train or a bus from Chengde to Beijing. Visit Beihai Park in Beijing.

Day 8: Fly home.

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5. www.orientaltravel.com/province/city/Chengde.htm

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1. "World Heritage in China: The Mountain Resort and Eight Outer Temples in Chengde", Issue No. 233, Dec. 1999.
2. "My Impression of the Bashang Grassland", Issue No. 231, Oct. 1999.
3. "Hunting for Autumn at Bashang", Issue No. 231, Oct. 1999.
4. "Bashang — a Fragrant Grassland", Issue No. 199, Feb. 1997.

民間民俗藝術

Editor's Note: Mr. Yan Bailiang took these photos over a 24-hour period, from 12 noon December 31, 2000 to the same time on January 1, 2001 in Chang'an Boulevard, Beijing. In a brief message, the photographer wrote: "Chang'an Boulevard has been acclaimed as the No. 1 Street in China. It has witnessed many historical changes and is regarded as a long corridor of time truthfully recording life in China. Meanwhile, politically, economically and culturally, it also embodies contemporary Chinese society. In this ancient yet modern street, various people can be found – local Beijingers, ethnic minorities and people from other parts of China. Therefore, I decided to set up my camera on this street to observe the life of Chinese people today.

"In terms of taste and quality, I wanted this group of pictures to be clear and objective. They were taken candidly with no intent to exaggerate or distort. The images were recorded simply as they were, from an attitude of experiencing life. To ensure the impartiality of these special pictures of a whole day's events, I took photos every 15 minutes round the clock, i.e., four times each hour for 24 hours..."

Additionally, Mr. Zhu Jianhui, a Beijing native, wrote fervently and eloquently in his pure Beijing dialect and with a strong, indigenous flavour. We hope the photos and text together will give readers a feel for Beijing.

A Day in Beijing in Photos and Words

Photos by Yan Bailiang
Article by Zhu Jianhui

Upon entering a new century, Beijing has already been an established city for 3,046 years. This new era brings to the ancient city something new, making it both old-fashioned and modern, traditional and progressive. In this large metropolis, fashionable, striking figures routinely drift into your line of sight one after another; meanwhile, wherever you go, you're sure to encounter something ancient, displaying so much classic elegance.

Talking of the past, the peepshow was one creation of the 19th century. It used to be a kind of entertainment popular at Tianqiao (in southern Beijing where shows were presented in the open air for the working-class). It's not hard to imagine that during those years there were not many ways to have *lezi* (fun). While the rich could afford to go to the theatre, the poor could only view moving pictures through a small lens while listening to someone singing nearby for entertainment. But nowadays there are so many choices: cinemas, nightclubs, song and dance halls, and videotape and VCD halls. There is simply nothing you can't do.

Don't believe it? Look at these *ga xiaozi* (cute boys). The ancients were right to say that your children and grandchildren had their own fortune and you didn't have to worry for their future. The young guys nowadays are always seeking out something new. They want to *sa huan'er* (enjoy themselves) like a little donkey rolling friskily on the ground. Seeing their hair dyed red, green, yellow and white, you might imagine that you have met the red- or green-haired ghosts in the stories you heard during your childhood.

Besides that, athletes and ball games have even adopted some foreign names such as "NBA". Who knows what the old-fashioned Grandma Jiujin Laotai (a conservative old lady in Lu Xun's story) would

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say about this? Yet without these features, a modern metropolis would seem to be missing something. Actually, there are lots of things that make you miss the old Beijing. Just look: there are more than 100 Beijing snacks which *jiaoban* (challenge) the food of any part of the world and take you back to the last century, or much further than that...

Yes, there are people walking with their birds around the walls of the Forbidden City, the Tongzi River, the City Moat, and in all the parks. Some of the birds are so precious, with beautiful cages and covers. However, you hear fewer and fewer birds singing in the capital. One day you may find there are birds that do not consume food but only electricity in these cages. If that day comes, how will the bird owners feel? They are mostly retired, as those who have to earn their crust cannot afford such leisure. Now look, the *banye* who used to pedal flatbed tricycles transporting goods are pedalling rickshaws for tourists. Don't look down on them! The ones who started early have piled up large stacks of greenbacks and Hong Kong dollars in the bank. Even CEOs would feel jealous. I bet if Xiang Zi (the hero in the film *Rickshaw Boy*) were around now, he would have earned enough to buy quite a decent courtyard with houses on four sides since he worked like crazy. But as things constantly change, he might have been driving a taxi for a long time.

Well, the world has changed, and you have to change with the times. Look here. Have you ever experienced having a haircut at the foot of the high walls of the Forbidden City? People in the Qing Dynasty generally had their foreheads shaved by barbers who carried their gear in two boxes balanced on a pole over their shoulder. A two-part allegorical saying came from the description of the trade: the gear on the barber's carrying pole --- only one side is hot. Why? Because one box held a stove for heating water for a shampoo, and the other held a basin and mirror. Now neither box is hot, and even the mirror is gone. Barbers put their tools on a bike or tricycle now. They spot a nice quiet place, don their white smocks, and customers come. In the warm setting sun beside the wall, barber and customer engage in trivial chat such as "someone has a new baby", or talk about big issues, of China and the world, say the

Sino-US relations after September 11. To say nothing of the Chinese, even foreigners like to have their hair cut at the foot of the royal city wall. What do they want? Could they be here to feel the infinite, royal graciousness? Well, you'll have to savour the taste slowly yourself.

Speaking of taste, have you ever seen a smoker "tasting" smoke? Especially after solving a big problem, he can scarcely wait to pick up a cigarette and hurriedly light it for a deep smoke. Then he puffs it leisurely with such relish and satisfaction. Just look at the old man on the Jinshui (Golden Water) Bridge in front of the Tian'anmen Rostrum (Heavenly Peace Gate). It might have been his lifelong wish to come to Beijing and see Tian'anmen. How can he resist a smoke to calm his excitement? Then, turning around, he has a closer look at the white marble banisters, the red wall, the portrait of Mao, recalling the years in which he experienced ups and downs...

When the hustle and bustle of the daytime city fade, you are faced with quiet hutongs lined with traditional courtyards. It used to be the time to strike the watchman's clapper in bygone days. Now neon lights sparkle all along the street, brighten up the sky over the capital. A new century has come quietly with these brilliant, pearly lights.

Translated by Yu Ling

1. Progressive young people on the Chang'an Boulevard.
2. A traditional folk show, Layangpian (Slide Drawing), is revitalised.
3. On this food street, you can taste cuisines of various places in China.
4. A corner of a residential area in Beijing in the quiet night.
5. Having a smoke on the Golden Water Bridge – an elderly man realises his dream to see Tian'anmen Square.
6. A public bathroom at Nanchizi.
7. Pedicabs have to go all out to compete with taxis.
8. A boy walks out of his home in this traditional quadrangle, dreaming of becoming a basketball star.
9. A barber can always find business at the foot of the ancient city wall.
10. Visitors in the Forbidden City. There seems to be less and less room in this world for birds.

From a Place Far from Home to a Foreign Country

Knocking about Harbin and Vladivostok

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, Liu Xiangyang, Chu Kit
Article by Chu Kit

Harbin is a young and romantic Chinese city brimming with the strong flavour of a foreign colony. Vladivostok is a Russian naval port with streams of Chinese tourists roaming its streets. The 2,489 km Central East Railway has linked the two cities for over 100 years. With time, it has become a hot route for trans-country tours.

Now, scores of tourist groups leave Harbin every day to visit Vladivostok, Russia's largest port on the Pacific, via the Chinese border towns of Suifenhe or Dongning. To realise my dream of going to Russia from China, I boarded a train from Changchun to Harbin after I finished my business there last autumn.

I arrived at Harbin one bright autumn morning. Leaving the crowds of the Harbin Railway Station behind, I checked into a hotel that was once the main accommodation for Russians visiting Harbin. Yet, with the continuing development of the domestic economy, the number of tourists from other parts of China has steadily increased. Most of the guests in the hotel were middle-aged Chinese men wearing meticulously tailored, Western-style clothes. I didn't see one Russian.

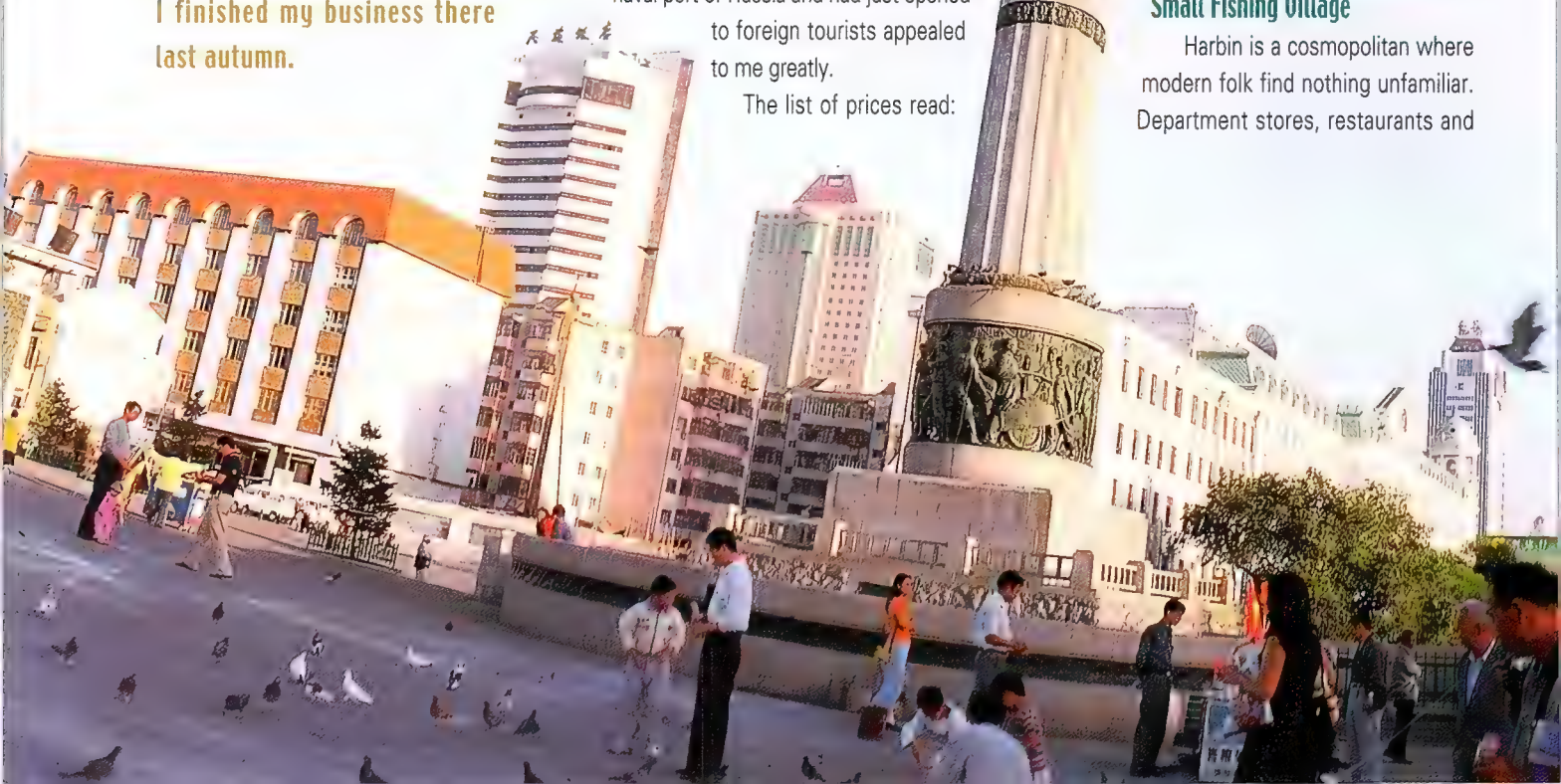
The hotel was affiliated with a travel agency which organised tours to Vladivostok in Russia. In fact, there are many tourist groups going from Harbin to various parts of Russia. Some go all the way to Moscow. I, however, selected Vladivostok, as it was not too far. Moreover, the fact that it was the famous naval port of Russia and had just opened to foreign tourists appealed to me greatly.

The list of prices read: "Six-day group tour, 1,800 yuan." "So inexpensive," I thought. Yet, when I showed my "Home-Visiting Certificate" issued to residents of Hong Kong and Macao for their visits to their native places in the mainland, the price immediately shot up to 2,600 yuan. "It is more expensive for residents of Hong Kong than for domestic citizens, because the visa application is more complicated," the manager of the travel agency said breezily. After a round of bargaining, he finally agreed to lower it by 200 yuan.

The earliest departure time would be the evening of the next day. For myself, I was happy to have some free time to walk around Harbin, which enjoys such great fame.

The Hundred-Year Changes of a Small Fishing Village

Harbin is a cosmopolitan where modern folk find nothing unfamiliar. Department stores, restaurants and



hotels abound and well-paved roads extend in all directions. With the help of my guidebook and a map of the downtown area, I strolled towards Zhongyang (Central) Boulevard in the centre of the city.

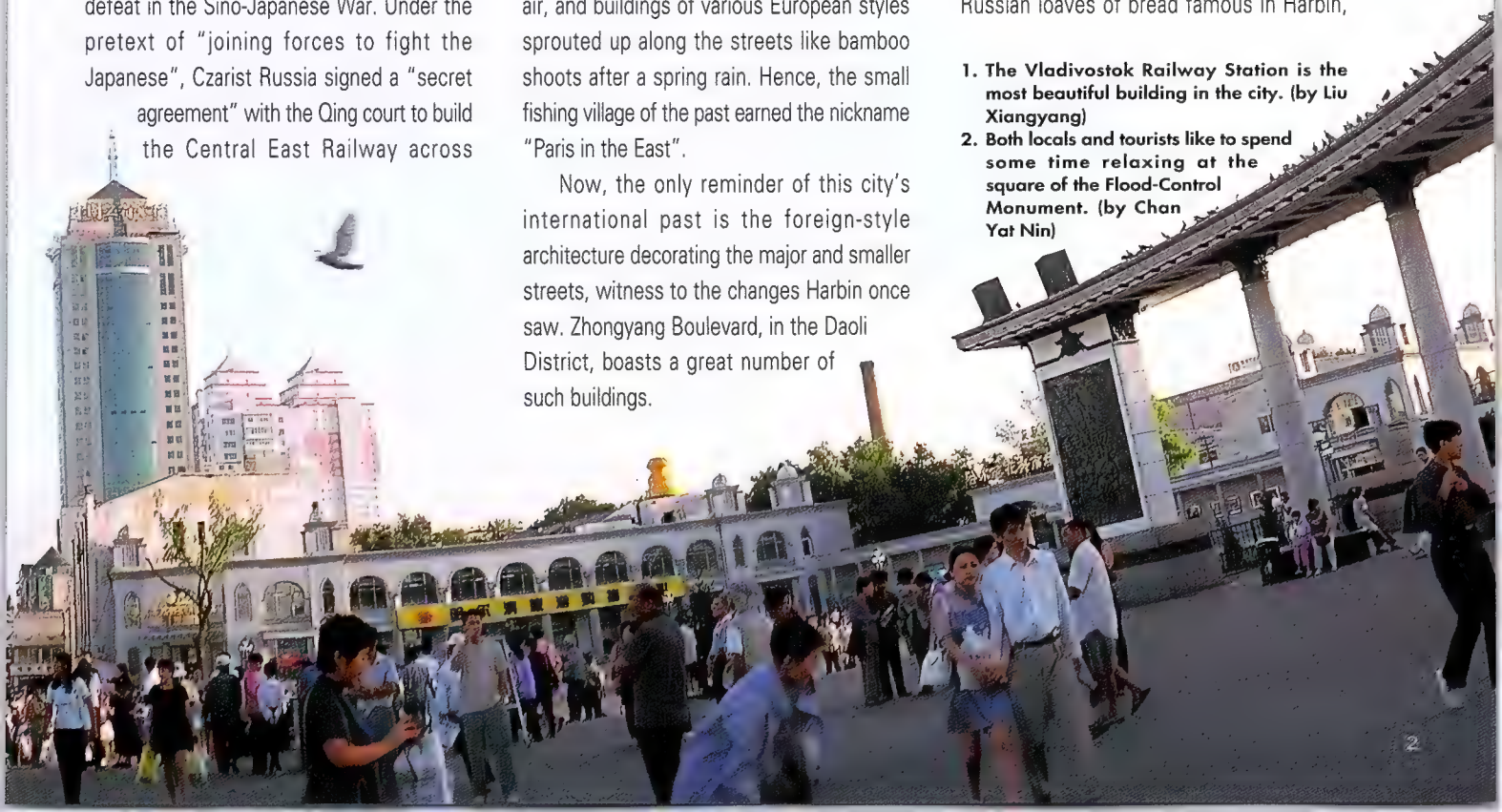
In fact, Harbin is a very young city, with a history of some 100 years only. Yet, in this short time span, it has grown from a small, unknown fishing village on the Songhua River into a modern metropolis bustling with traffic and bursting with prosperity — a real miracle. In 1895, the Qing court suffered a significant defeat in the Sino-Japanese War. Under the pretext of "joining forces to fight the Japanese", Czarist Russia signed a "secret agreement" with the Qing court to build the Central East Railway across Northeast China and the far eastern part of Russia. At that time, Harbin was home to a few families of fishermen and farmers. Upon finding itself at the junction of the T-shaped railway, Harbin changed markedly. With the railway completed, Harbin's favourable location appealed to many Russians as well as gold-diggers from other parts of the world. They set up businesses in the city and brought in their native cultures. By and by, Harbin gradually developed into a truly international city. Different accents and languages filled the air, and buildings of various European styles sprouted up along the streets like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. Hence, the small fishing village of the past earned the nickname "Paris in the East".

Now, the only reminder of this city's international past is the foreign-style architecture decorating the major and smaller streets, witness to the changes Harbin once saw. Zhongyang Boulevard, in the Daoli District, boasts a great number of such buildings.

Every Brick Is Worth One US Dollar

Arriving at Zhongyang Boulevard, I was a bit perplexed. One building after another in neo-classical and eclectic modes came into view, with characteristics of Renaissance or Baroque styles. If not for signs reading "Northeast China Fur" and "Xinhua Bookstore", I might have thought I was in Europe.

The road was paved differently, with simple, plain square stone blocks. They have become so smooth that they resemble the Russian loaves of bread famous in Harbin,



1. **The Vladivostok Railway Station is the most beautiful building in the city. (by Liu Xiangyang)**
2. **Both locals and tourists like to spend some time relaxing at the square of the Flood-Control Monument. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

just smaller in size. The road was constructed in 1924 under the supervision of a Russian engineer. The granite blocks were quarried and processed somewhere far away and were shipped to Harbin, each block costing one US dollar. I saw many beautiful girls in the latest fashions walk along this "expensive" road.

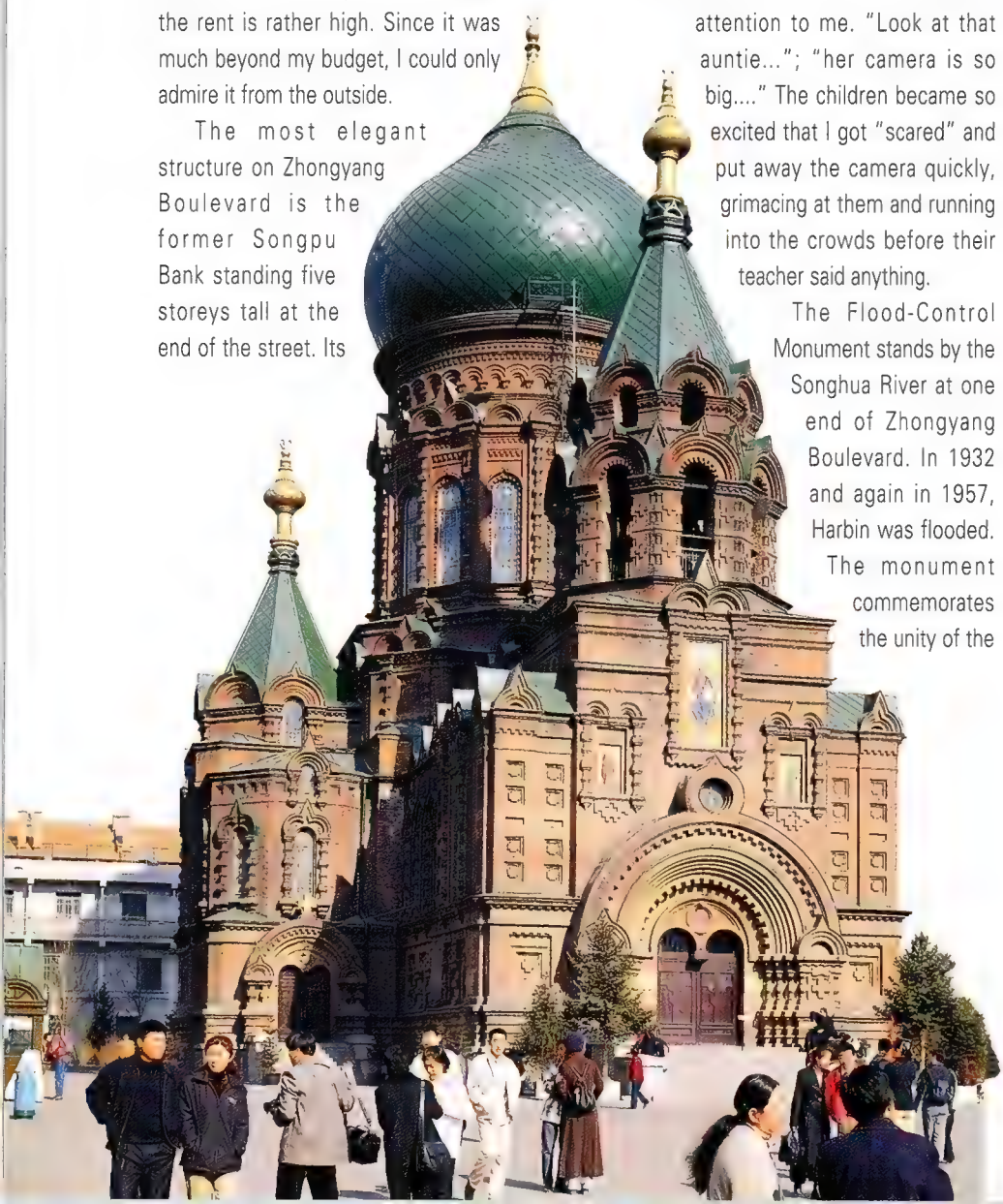
Eighteen years older than the road is the Moderne Hotel. The structure in Louis XIV style was built by a Frenchman. Though so named, it is not easy to remain "modern" for some 100 years. Nicknamed "Lesser Versailles", the hotel retains a noble, elegant air though its age is showing. While not the most luxurious hotel in town, many people continue to stay there thanks to the great fame it enjoys. As a result, the rent is rather high. Since it was much beyond my budget, I could only admire it from the outside.

The most elegant structure on Zhongyang Boulevard is the former Songpu Bank standing five storeys tall at the end of the street. Its small, exquisite semi-circular balcony and gorgeously sculpted decorations fully display the architectural style typical of the Baroque period. Now, the bank has traded "business" for "culture" to become the Xinhua Bookstore, enhancing its already refined air.

On the open area in front of the bookstore, I ran into a group of kindergarten kids whose teacher was leading them on a tour of Zhongyang Boulevard. "Children, look at this. This is a Baroque building of the 17th century..." The teacher said melodiously. The kids turned their heads and looked. How much they understood, no one knows. "Look, that auntie is taking pictures of us." A little boy had noticed my "sly move" and happily related his discovery to the others.

Soon, all the kids turned their attention to me. "Look at that auntie..."; "her camera is so big...." The children became so excited that I got "scared" and put away the camera quickly, grimacing at them and running into the crowds before their teacher said anything.

The Flood-Control Monument stands by the Songhua River at one end of Zhongyang Boulevard. In 1932 and again in 1957, Harbin was flooded. The monument commemorates the unity of the



citizens in fighting the rising waters. Two fountains, one above the other, represent the highest watermarks of both floods. The riverside square attracts many people flying kites. Skilfully pulling the strings, they send the colourful kites high into the azure sky. The kites were all sorts of shapes — hawks, butterflies and dragonflies.... The people of Harbin are lucky to have such a lovely place to amuse themselves.

An Onion in a Busy Shopping Area

I walked to my next destination, St. Sofia's Church. When its huge onion-shaped dome suddenly appeared amidst numerous modern buildings, I could not believe my eyes.

The gorgeous Byzantine structure is laid out east to west in a symmetrical cross shape. Designed by a Russian architect, it was built in 1923. Due to the construction of the Central East Railway at that time, Czarist Russia sent troops to be stationed in Harbin. As most Russians practise Eastern Orthodox religion, numerous churches were built in the city. St. Sofia's was the church of the East Siberia Infantry Division No. 4. No longer used for religious services, the church is now the Harbin Museum of Architecture.

Inside, the altar, candles and other religious paraphernalia were gone. Still, a sacred atmosphere reigned, instilling respect

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in the visitors. Soft sunshine filtered through the small, vaulted windows and shown on the decorative — if somewhat damaged — patterns which gracefully decorated the richly coloured wall. They had once reflected the warm glow of candles and echoed the prayers of the clergy and worshippers.

Exiting the cathedral, I got a call from the manager of the travel agency. He said, "No problem with your visa. The group will set off tomorrow night." So, at dusk the next day, I followed a group of fellow tourists on board a train to Suifenhe, ready to pass through customs early the next morning and enter Russia.

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Changes on Zhongyang Boulevard

One hundred years ago, Zhongyang Boulevard was called "China Street" as it was strewn with straw and mud huts housing the poor Chinese workers who were building the Central East Railway. Before the railway was completed, because goods had to be shipped to Harbin on the Songhua River and one end of China Street stretched to the river's bank, business people from various countries built houses along the street. As the street grew increasingly prosperous, department stores, hotels, restaurants and theatres rose up. Architects from various countries fully displayed their talents, erecting buildings of various popular styles. Eventually, the street became a corridor of architectural art, making it a must-see attraction for all tourists to Harbin.

Going Through Customs Alone

The train pulled into Suifenhe at six the next morning. Suifenhe is a fairly modern little mountain town with quiet streets and a small population. Yet, it has a history of some 100 years as an international trading port. From Suifenhe, two highways and a railway lead into Russia. So, Suifenhe is listed as a first-class port by the Chinese government. Many tourist groups pass through Suifenhe on their way to Vladivostok.

In our group of 49, males made up the overwhelming majority. Moreover, all of them were middle-aged. There were only three women including myself. Later I learnt that most of the group members had come to Harbin on business. They made a trip to Vladivostok as a diversion. Miss Yao, our guide, raised a small blue flag and led us from the little railway station to a coach waiting outside.

As we boarded, Yao told us that too many tourist groups were going through the customs office at Suifenhe that day, so to save time we would change to another port — Dongning. According to her, Dongning was also a first-class land port and the closest one to Vladivostok, just 153 km away.

1. **The old and the new: a KFC advertisement on an old building in Zhongyang Boulevard, Harbin. (by Chu Kit)**
2. **The gorgeous St. Sofia's Church adds a Russian touch to the international metropolis of Harbin. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
3. **Many characteristic shops are found on Zhongyang Boulevard. (by Chu Kit)**
4. **Kindergarten children having their "city tour". (by Chu Kit)**
5. **Harbin women are tall and care about clothes and makeup; even policewomen look like models. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

However, because it is rather far from Suifenhe, not many travellers choose to go through customs there.

In the customs office at Dongning, the official checking my documents showed some concern, noting that I was the only single woman in the group and the only one from Hong Kong. Looking at me, he asked, "Just you yourself to Russia?" "Yes." "Why are you going there?" "To travel." "To travel alone?" he asked unbelievably. "What do you think I am going to do? Escape to Russia?" I thought to myself. Showing him my bag, I replied firmly, "Yes, to travel alone." He finally gave back my passport, still eyeing me suspiciously.

Coming out of Russian customs, we encountered our first language problem. After queuing for three hours waiting to be admitted, everyone was desperate to relieve themselves. So, the moment we cleared customs, we rushed for the W.C. Once there, everyone was stumped; there were only two Russian letters "Ж" and "M". Which was which? Suddenly, Miss Yao shouted from nowhere, "Men turn left and women right." Ever since, those two letters have stayed in my mind — "Ж" for ladies and "M" for gentlemen.

We then boarded a shabby Russian coach and headed for Vladivostok.

Boarding and Dining: Basics Are Luxuries

Situated on the Mulavyev-Amur Peninsula, Vladivostok is the largest city in far eastern Russia. Being a place of strategic importance, Vladivostok was not opened to foreign tourists until January 1992. After a four-hour drive, we checked into a hotel on the outskirts of Vladivostok. It is said that in the past it was a sanatorium for Russian leaders. However, it looked extremely commonplace, no better than most one- or two-star hotels in China. Miss Yao explained that tourism industry in Vladivostok is quite new, so facilities are still relatively backward. We were told that some starred hotels did not even have sufficient hot water supplies — we considered ourselves lucky that our hotel did. Having distributed the keys, Yao declared, "Supper will be served in the canteen in 10 minutes." Immediately, commotion ensued. "Supper so early?" "Not early at all. It is already 7 o'clock." It so happened that Vladivostok time was three hours ahead of Beijing time.

Titbits about Vladivostok

Chinese people call Vladivostok "Haishenwei", as it was formerly Chinese territory. In the Yuan Dynasty, it was called Yongming City and a post station was set up there. "Wei" is Chinese for "harbour" and the place abounded in sea cucumber ("Haishen" in Chinese), hence the name Haishenwei. In 1860, the signing of the Sino-Russia Treaty of Beijing ceded Haishenwei to Russia. Later, the town developed into a major naval port on the Pacific coast. In 1862, its name was changed to "Vladivostok", meaning "controlling the East" in Russian. Now, Vladivostok is the base of the Pacific Fleet of Russia as well as the capital of Primorsky Kray.

Supper turned out to be exceptionally simple as well — bread, a small dish of rice with several pieces of chicken, plus one thin vegetable soup and an egg. At first, I thought the travel agency was trying to save money. Looking around, we saw that Russian guests had the same meal. Only then did it really sink in that I was in a foreign country and should not demand too much.

Monthly Family Income Equals 1,000 Yuan

Vladivostok is a city with mountains at the back and sea in the front. Rising early next morning, we took the tourist coach to the city's highest point — the Far East Science and Engineering University — for a bird's-eye view of the downtown area. Harbours full of naval vessels, cargo ships and fishing boats dotted the Golden Horn

Gulf. Apart from being a naval port, Vladivostok is also a trading port. It shoulders the major part of the cargo shipping in Far East Russia. Thanks to its enormous handling capability, lots of goods coming from China are transferred from there to overseas. In addition, it is Russia's largest fishing port and boasts a cold storage capacity of tens of thousand tons. Therefore, Vladivostok is famous for cheap seafood.

Although the Russian economy has picked up in recent years, most places, including Vladivostok, are not yet rich. According to our guide, an average family of four has a total monthly income of 3,000-4,000 roubles, roughly 1,000 yuan. Coupled with the energy shortage and serious corruption, the city lacks the funds to renovate its infrastructure, which is why most of its streets and houses appear worn and shabby.

From Vladivostok to Moscow: 9,288 Kilometres

Coming downhill from the university, we went into the city centre to visit a military stronghold. During World War I, it had helped hold off many attacks from both land and sea. Now, many powerful weapons used at that time are displayed there. Furthermore, since the time of Peter the Great, Russian military fortifications on the sea have observed the tradition of firing guns at noontime. At 12 o'clock every day, a gun-firing ceremony is held. As the time nears, the space between the tanks and big guns fills up with Chinese tourists, looking more like a military exercise in China.

Then, we toured the C-56 submarine, which performed great military exploits during World War II and is now a museum, the Vladivostok Aquarium, the city's largest fish market and its biggest department store. For me, however, the railway station was the most unforgettable.

Built in 1912, this easternmost terminal of the Trans-Siberia Railway is a splendid example of the Russian architectural style of the 17th century. Starting here, the shining, black steel rails extend more than 9,000 km to Moscow, running through seven time zones. Inside the station sat a steam locomotive built during World War II. Prior to

1. **Many Russians come to China to do business via Suifenhe. (by Tan Jingtao)**
2. **The battlement in Vladivostok which played an important role in World War I. (Chu Kit)**
3. **Young ladies of Vladivostok are very friendly and open-minded. (by Chu Kit)**
4. **A panoramic view of the city and its harbours as seen from the Far East Science and Engineering University in Vladivostok. (by Chu Kit)**

1963, such locomotives routinely ran on the Trans-Siberia Railway. On the engine, "9288" was carved, indicating the distance from Vladivostok to Moscow. The rather crowded square in front of the railway station was a terminus for public buses. Close by were many stalls hawking various snacks, an ideal place to observe everyday life in Vladivostok.

Second-Hand Vehicles Fill the Streets

When we were going back to the tourist coach, several kids smudged with dirt suddenly appeared and surrounded my fellow male tourists, no doubt looking "rich" in their well-tailored, Western clothes. Hands extended, the kids shouted in a strange Chinese, "Renminbi OK! Renminbi OK!"

We saw more signs of the depressed local economy. Although a great number of private cars ran in the streets, there were few new ones. Most were second-hand, imported from Japan and Korea. The imported used cars are sold at very low prices — a second-hand "Luxe" costs about US$1,000. Most public trolley buses, which are free of charge, looked shabby. Some had huge dents in them, seeming to have barely survived some serious traffic accident. Some of the newer public buses still displayed Korean ads.

Though Not Rich, We Have a Happy Life

Nevertheless, the Russian attitude towards life seems optimistic. From my observations, I noticed that Russians pay great attention to manners and comforts. You will rarely find a woman who does not wear make-up. As for Russian men, they favour vodka most. Moreover, they can hold their drink well. According to the guide, most Russians do not have a tradition of saving money. They don't seem bothered when the bank balance drops. In Vladivostok, ice cream booths are very popular. Shops selling food are open 24 hours, hence the large numbers of overweight people you see in the city. People in Vladivostok also pay great attention to home decor. More often than not, one or two pots of blooming roses are placed in the window. Meagre incomes obviously do not reduce the enthusiasm for life. Most people have broad smiles on their faces, seeming to say, "We are not rich. Yet, we have a happy life."

Svetlana was our Russian guide. Her name is the same as a famous street in the city, meaning "brightness". She was a second-year student in the Chinese Department of the Far East Science and Engineering University. When asked why she chose to learn our language, she said in uneven Chinese, "More and more Chinese come to Vladivostok to travel or do business. It will be easier to find a job if one understands Chinese." "Do you like being a tour guide?" I asked. She blinked her blue eyes and shrugged her shoulders, saying, "It

is nothing to do with 'like' or 'not like'. It is a job. As long as I earn money, I can buy what I like. Then, it is OK." So, to live comfortably seems to be the major purpose in life for many Russians.

Farewell, Vladivostok!

Although it was a six-day trip, four days were spent on the road, meaning our stay in Vladivostok lasted only two days. For people in Vladivostok, the many Chinese tourist groups like ours every day may possibly mean more income and job opportunities. Sitting on the train going back and watching the undulating fields fly past, I longed to be home again.

Translated by Z. G. Li

1. A locomotive that ran on the Siberia Railway until 1963. (by Chu Kit)
2. Citizens in Vladivostok can take a trolley bus free of charge. (by Liu Xiangyang)
3. Wooden dolls are a popular tourist souvenir from Russia. (by Chu Kit)

Tips for the Traveller

Harbin is linked by air and rail with many major Chinese cities. One can choose to take an airplane or train to Harbin.

To take a train to Harbin from Beijing, the trip takes about 17 hours. Ticket: 197 yuan for a hard, lower berth.

Accommodation

Songhuajiang Gloria Commercial Hotel****
Add: 257 Zhongyang Boulevard, Harbin;
Tel: (451) 4638855; Rate: 588 yuan/standard double room

Harbin Moderne Hotel***
Add: 89 Zhongyang Boulevard, Harbin; Tel: (451) 4615846; Rate: 400 yuan/standard double room

Xiushui Hotel**
Add: 174 Fendou Road, Harbin; Tel: (451) 2658091; Rate: 200 yuan/standard double room

Tianzhu Hotel**
Add: 14 Songhuajiang Street, Harbin; Tel: (451) 3637261; Rate: 180 yuan/standard double room

City Transport

For Zhongyang Boulevard, take public bus No. 1, 2 or 20.
For St. Sofia's Church, take Public bus No. 2 or 13.

Travel Agencies

Heilongjiang China International Travel Service	Add: 2 Tielu Street, Harbin	Tel: (451) 3661191
Harbin International Travel Service	Add: 93 Zhongshan Road, Harbin	Tel: (451) 2325873
Heilongjiang China Travel Service	Add: 72 Red Army Street, Harbin	Tel: (451) 3640984
Heilongjiang China Youth Travel Service	Add: 95-2 Fendou Road, Nangang District, Harbin	Tel: (451) 2644682

Things to Bear in Mind

- Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan passport holders need to apply for tourist visas at least two days before travelling to Vladivostok.
- All telecommunications apparatus (such as cell phones) are not allowed into Russia. Before leaving China, your guide will collect them and store them. Independent travellers should be aware of this.
- Your guide can help you exchange money. The rate is about one yuan to three roubles. Unused currency can be changed back at the end of the trip.
- Vladivostok has a maritime climate, relatively warm and moist. Autumn is the best travel season. Average temperature in September and October: 15-20°C.

DIY Travel

While not impossible, DIY trips can be problematic for two major reasons:

1. Visa Application

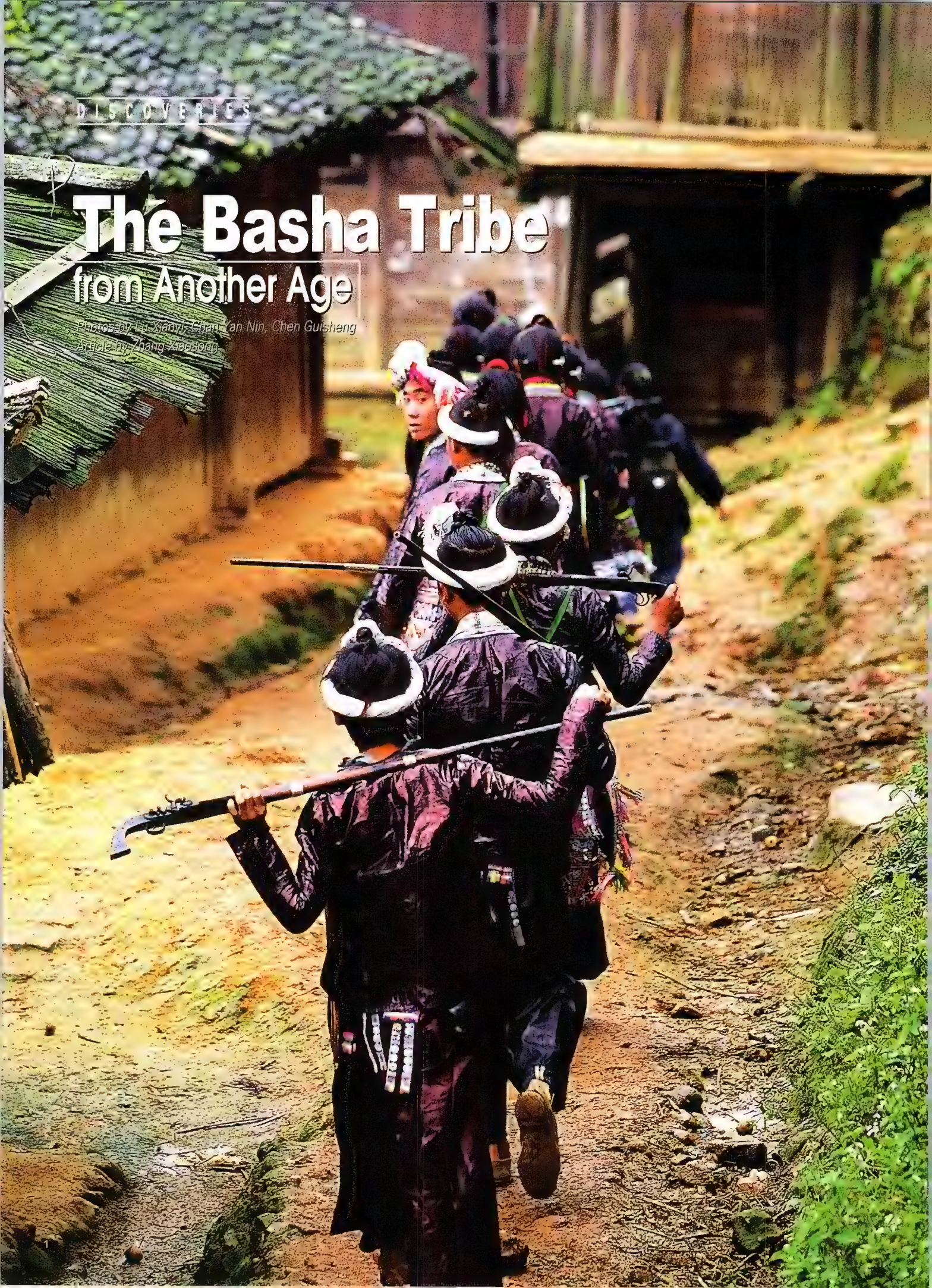
When apply for a travel visa to Russia, you have to supply an affirmation letter from the hotel where you are going to stay. Therefore, you must book a hotel in advance through a travel agency. It may take days for them to confirm your reservation. In my case, I waited nearly two weeks and still received no reply. That was why I joined a tour group. (Hong Kong citizens must apply for tourist visas to Russia through Global Union Express Limited (HK). Add: Room 24, 2/F, New Henry House, Ice House Street, Central; Tel: 286 83231.

2. Language Barrier

Once out of China, generally only Russian is spoken. Chinese and English are not much use. The same applies to Vladivostok. You'll be fine if you understand Russian. Otherwise, it is very inconvenient.

The Basha Tribe from Another Age

Photos by Lu Xiaoyi, Chan Yan Nin, Chen Guisheng
Article by Zhang Xiaojong



In the remote mountainous region bordering Guizhou and Guangxi live numerous tribes of ethnic minorities. Closed in by towering mountains and deep ravines, these tribes have lived in isolation, seldom communicating with the outer world. Even now they retain the little changed lifestyle of their forebears of hundreds of years ago. Located in Congjiang County of the Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, the Basha tribe is one such "cultural island". Woven into their simple, primordial existence are stories little known outside....

Basha Tribe: Hidden in Remote Mountains

Upon exiting Kaili, capital of the Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, the highway wriggled up and down high ridges and deep ravines. After crossing Mount Leigong, it entered the homeland of the Miao people in the Douliu River Valley. Ahead of us, one high-rising mountain after another blocked the view. Southeast Guizhou is a famous forest region, which once produced timber for ancient imperial courts of various dynasties. The Basha tribe lies hidden in this remote place. Even after hundreds of years, few know of its existence and members of the tribe in turn remain indifferent to the outside world.

The 2,000 or so Basha tribe members live in five villages on Yueliang (Moon) Mountain. They live by planting rice and hunting, and their history is kept in legends passed from generation to generation. Gun Daoyuan, a respected elderly of one of the villages, said, "A long, long time ago, Chi You, the ancestor of our Miao people, had three sons. We Bashas are the offspring of his third son. Later, Chi You fought against the Yellow Emperor and was defeated. So, he ordered his son to lead the Miaos to withdraw from the Central Plains. Struggling over mountains and across the Hunshui

1. **Hunters never let their guns touch the ground. A mark left by the stock of a gun can scare wild animals away. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
2. **The Miao people like to eat fragrant glutinous rice. Despite the low output, each family plants some for their own consumption. (by Chan Yan Nin)**
3. **The Basha tribe comprises five villages located close together. (by Chan Yan Nin)**

(Muddy Water), Qingshui (Clear Water) and Heishui (Black Water) rivers, our forebears settled down in obscurity in Basha...."

The Basha community is male-centred. Whether sorcerers, spiritual leaders, or the village heads, or the chieftain of their tribe, all are men. To perform their duties well, Basha men pay particular attention to their physical fitness as well as hunting and farming skills and their outfits. After Chi You was defeated, he led his tribe on a long-distance move from the Central Plains to the Southwest. They braved the treacherous mountains and fought ferocious animals. Even today, Basha males keep this soldierly tradition and always have their hunting guns ready. Sharpshooters, they can walk very fast in the mountain lands.

Basha men wear a special hairstyle called *hugun* in Basha Miao language. It is the most important trait for males. For a typical *hugun*, the long hair is shaved off all around except for that growing from the crown. This hair is then coiled up into a kind of topknot. The hairstyle, which must be kept all one's life, originated in the time of Chi You. So, *hugun* should be considered the most ancient hairstyle for males in China.

From birth, a boy's hair is not to be cut arbitrarily. "Hair is the lifeline given by the ancestors and you should never cut it at will," caution the village elders. Sometime between the ages of 7-15, the boy goes through a ritual to mark his transition into adulthood. When the times comes, he invites several pals to go into the mountains to catch birds, to the rice fields to catch eels and to the streams to catch fish.... The greater the catch, the better his ability, and the brighter his future. Then, his friends gather in the boy's home to drink and roast and eat their haul. The sorcerer of his clan shaves him and ties his remaining hair into a *hugun*. Upon completing the strict rites as set by the ancestors, he receives a hunting gun from his father. This ritual establishes him as an independent adult. From then on, the boy is considered a real man who can join other adults to play the lusheng (bamboo wind instrument), roam about on his own, date and marry a girl, and start a family.

The Bold and Unrestrained Courtship

In Basha, courtship between young men and women follows the seasons; there are three festivals of courtship in a year, in spring, summer and autumn, respectively.

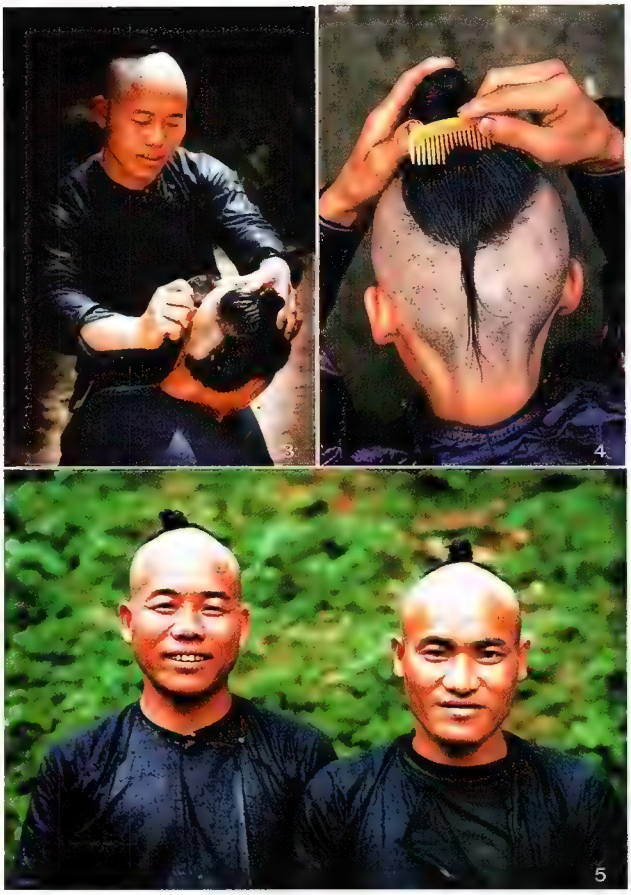
In the first month of the lunar calendar, young people enjoy themselves on the mountain slopes by playing the lusheng and engaging in all sorts of games. In summer, when the rice flowers, they gather in the forest to play on a swing. The cord of the swing is made of rice straw and tied to a huge tree branch. The young folk jump onto the swing in pairs. The higher the swing goes, the louder the girl shouts. Then, the young man takes the young woman in his arms....

The youths make friends and display their affections openly through antiphonal singing. So, everyone is a good singer. When playing games, the young men compete with one another to impress the girls.

In autumn, there is a "teasing the girls"

festival. During the day, the young men accompany the girls to harvest rice for a family, each fellow and girl bringing along a bamboo basket packed with food. In the evening, they gather in the host's house, where drinking, singing and "embracing girls" take place. A young man can embrace several girls. As for the girls, they are happy to be embraced. If many young men embrace the same girl, it means she is very marriageable. A girl who has never been embraced by a man feels ashamed of herself. If a young, unmarried man from outside embraces a girl, it means she is the greatest beauty of Basha. So, when an eligible young outsider comes to the area, the Basha girls try every means to attract him and make him stay. Often, the boldness of the Basha girls scares timid outsiders. Of course, there are strict rules for the "embracing", which should never be breached. Otherwise, the girl and the young man will be thrown out of the village for good.

Autumn is when the Basha play the lusheng and make sacrifices to their ancestors. At this time, if you hear a young man singing to a young woman, "You're a sow and will give birth to lots of piglets; you're a hen and will lay an egg each day..." and see the girl blush, you can be sure they will soon marry. For a Basha woman, the highest compliment is to be compared to a sow and a hen. When a young woman is so praised, her chaperons help prepare her trousseau. Then, she gives a pouch, which she has made with great care, to the young man as a token of their engagement. Normally, the wedding takes place in the eleventh month of the lunar calendar. While courtship is unrestrained, rules for marriage are very strict which has helped make the Basha Miaos a close community, ensuring their continuance.

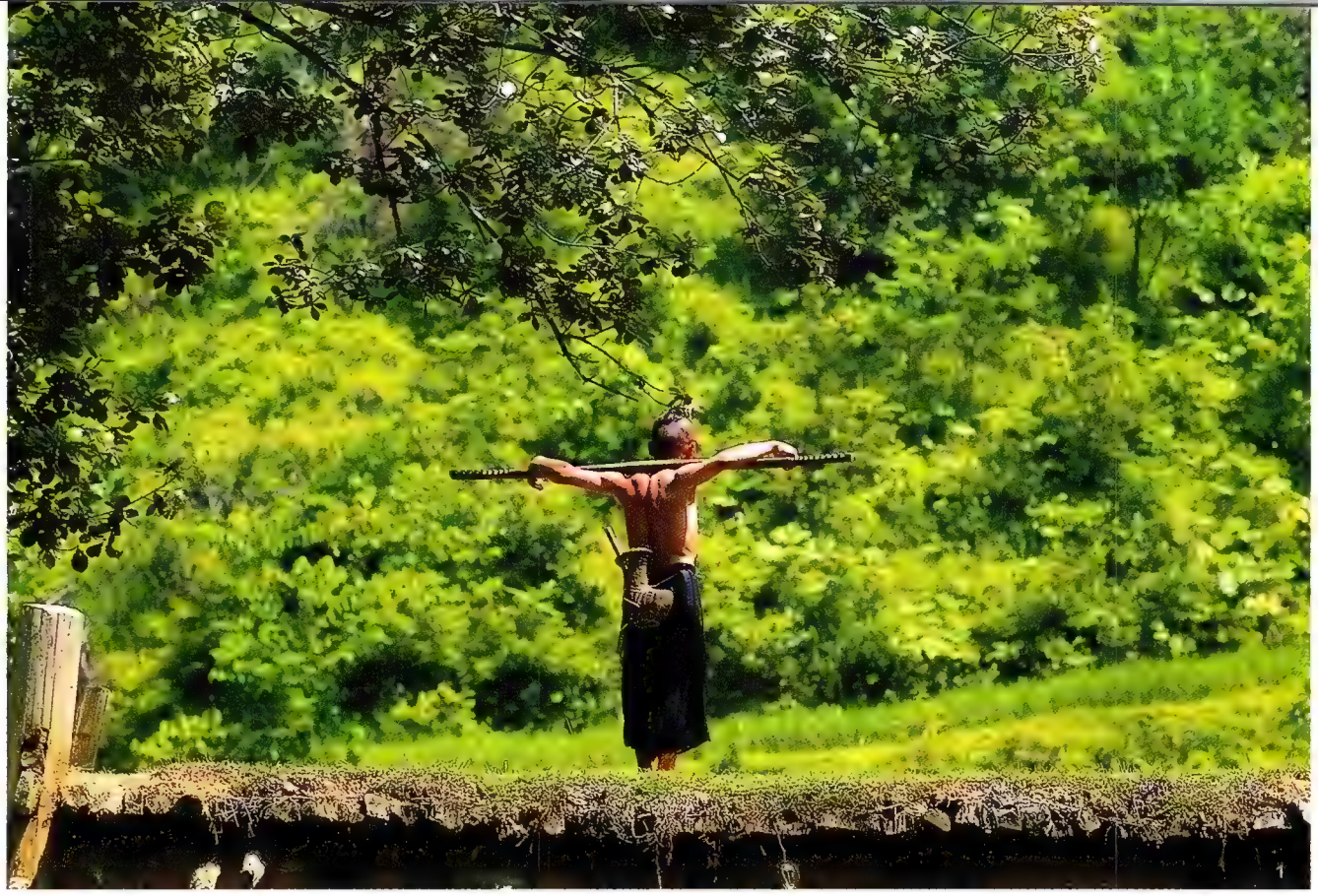


1. Home-woven cloth hanging down from the house. (by Lu Xianyi)
2. Young people gather in the forest and play on a swing. (by Wu Jingying)
3-5. The *hugun* hairstyle of Basha males is passed down from antiquity. The barber shaves the wetted hair with a sickle-shaped razor, leaving only the hair on the crown. (by Chen Guisheng)
6. During the autumn "teasing the girls" festival, young men play the lusheng to attract girls. (by Chan Yat Nin)

'Omnipotent' Sorcerers

The elderly in Basha say that in the past there were many ghosts in the area they inhabited: mountain ghosts, tree ghosts..., each ghost has a name. If one encounters a ghost, he or she will have bad luck, get sick or even die. The Basha Miaos believe that the diseases of both men and animals are brought by ghosts. Deceased family members can also turn into ghosts and visit the family for food. If there is no offering in the ancestral shrine, the ghosts cause someone in the family to fall sick.

Only sorcerers do not fear ghosts since they can control them and drive them away. There are many sorcerers in Basha, both major and minor ones. A major sorcerer is responsible for a village. He has "omnipotent" power and presides over all sorts of important rituals, such as sacrifices to the mountains and ancestors. A minor sorcerer looks after the internal affairs of a clan, that is, warding off disasters for individuals. Sorcerers are the most learned of the Basha people and have studied the



rhetoric for making sacrifices to ghosts. This knowledge has been passed down from antiquity and the chanting can last for several days non-stop. Sorcerers keep track of all the stories about the Miao ancestors as well as those about ghosts, maintaining an eternal bridge between the worlds of ghosts and humans.

The third day of the first lunar month is the most important day for Basha Miaos. That day, the grand sorcerer, Gun Xiangjiu, presides over a divination with eggs. He uses 12 eggs to predict the tribe's luck for the year. At 62, Gun Xiangjiu is the head of a six-member family. As the family's rice field yields a good harvest every year regardless of drought or flood, the villagers believe the sorcerer and his family are under the protection of the mountain god. So, on this day, every family takes an egg to Gun Xiangjiu's home. There, a big pot of water is boiled on the stove. Gun Xiangjiu selects 12 eggs and puts them into the pot one by one. His hand stays in the water as the eggs are boiled. Amazingly, his hands are never burned, so it is believed that he has magical powers bestowed by the ancestors.

Basha Miaos believe that when people die, they can turn into two kinds of ghosts — wild or domestic. The wild ghosts can make people contract malignant diseases. One day, a villager in Wangjia Village died from an acute illness and his body turned green. The clan members laid his corpse under an old maple tree at the village entrance and then stood far away from it. Even his wife kept her distance. The villagers invited sorcerers to perform a "ghost-catching" ritual. With the help of his assistants, or *mishi*, the major sorcerer invoked all sorts of black magic to drive the dead man's soul to the place where the wild ghosts gather. They built an archway as a magic gate, and mimicked hungry tigers jumping on food and brave warriors brandishing deadly weapons. Finally, they inserted some arrowheads made of tile into the ground to keep the wild ghosts from harming the living. Then, all the clan members shared the chickens, liquor, salted fish and glutinous rice used for the sacrifices, washed their hands three times with medicated water and walked through the makeshift archway symbolising peace to go home.

Mishi Communicate with Souls

Mishi are assistants to sorcerers. It is believed they can enter the world of gods and ghosts and communicate with spirits. Basha Miaos believe their ancestors stay amongst them. Except for *mishi*, no ordinary people can enter their ethereal world. It is believed that gods selected the *mishis* during a secret ceremony held in the tribe. Basha has several *mishis*.

One day, Jia Gu's ox was sick. From early morning, the ox was in a temper. It refused to eat or work and dashed about wildly. Jia Gu asked the sorcerer, Jia Laolai, and *mishi*, Jia Lao'er, to treat the ox. By the door of Jia Gu's living room, they set up a wooden board on which they placed three bowls of liquor, two bowls of small fish, one bowl of rice, one bowl of water, a pot of liquor, one axe and a bundle of sweet grass picked from the mountain.

Standing by the board, the sorcerer read prayers to himself and waved his hands to put the sweet grass into the bowl of water, while making motions of pouring wine and spreading rice. Having finished chanting, he blew on a strip of grass. The *mishi* covered his own face with a piece of black cloth. Holding the cloth up by two corners, he blew to the bowl. In two or three minutes, his body began to quiver as he mumbled something. His head gradually lowered, seemingly unable to be supported any longer. Now and then, he suddenly jerked his body while the sorcerer chanted. The sorcerer acted out the movement of walking and his hands made

digging motions. After a long while, the *mishi* raised a stick horizontally over his head. Then, he lowered it and put it close to one ear, as if to listen. Suddenly, he took some rice from the bowl and ran out of the gate, spinning and propelling his body forward. In this way, he went to a mound of earth and dashed at the ground three times. At his heels, the sorcerer sprayed a mouthful of liquor on the mound.

Then, the two men returned to the courtyard. The sorcerer continued to make various incomprehensible movements. Still chanting, he used the axe to chop the sweet grass repeatedly. At this juncture, the shuddering *mishi* began to "talk" with the sorcerer. The sorcerer touched the *mishi's* feet, and the latter's body rocked while he beat his legs with both hands. Eventually, the *mishi* became calm again.

After all this, the sorcerer announced his diagnosis, saying that Jia Gu's ox was ill because ghostly worms had entered its eyes. Then, the *mishi* foraged about and finally trapped the "worms" between two trees. It is said the ox indeed recovered.

Different Social Structure

The Miao people in Basha are divided into several major clans with the Han family names of Gun, Wang, Jia, Yi and Wu. The Gun and Wang are the largest. But the Basha Miaos did not have family names in the past. During the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the imperial court forced them to adopt Han family names.

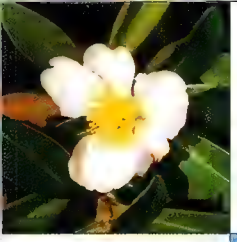
The Basha Miaos have strict marriage laws; young men and women with the same family name cannot marry. Among the Basha people it is generally believed the forefathers of the Guns and Yis were brothers, as were the forefathers of the Wus, Wangs and Jias. Therefore, marriage is forbidden between these clans. The Basha Miaos do not have their own written language and have adopted the system of adding the names of sons to those of the fathers. Each family can only make sacrifices to the previous two generations — those of the father and grandfather. Beyond these two generations, the deceased are treated as common ancestors of the entire clan.

Basha has developed a unique form of social organisation called *gu* (drum), a form of social order passed down from the ancient Miaos. A *gu* is a tribe, as that of Basha. The village elders are its "natural leaders". A council is formed of several elders, being those most respected and well versed in the age-old rules. The elders discuss and enact various rules for the village in the form of *yilang*. So, any decision thus made is called a *langyue*. This is why some sociologists say the Miao society is one ruled by customs.

Administrative villages have been established in Basha, with village heads and Party branch secretaries elected to perform mainly governmental duties. Yet, to do their duties well, they must work with the prestigious village elders and the powerful sorcerers. Hence, a threefold system of leadership exists. When necessary, the village head, Party secretary and elders call a meeting of all villagers to discuss and enact a rule. Long years of rule by customs have made Basha a "utopia" where neighbours help one another and there is no need to lock doors at night.

Translated by Z. G. Li

1. Basha males pay great attention to their physical fitness. (by Lu Xianyi)
2. Industrious Basha women learn to weave at very young age. (by Chen Guisheng)
3. A sorcerer and a *mishi* perform a mysterious ritual to drive away the evil spirit that made Jia Gu's ox sick. (by Lu Xianyi)
4. By pounding indigo grasses into a pulp and letting it ferment, the locals make their own dyes.



Chasing Wind and Waves in Sai Kung East

Photos & article by Liu Jiang

Soaring unemployment, a bear market, low real estate values, a deficit budget, improving language skills, going to the mainland, adding value.... We Hong Kong people have too much pressure and little happiness. It's time to escape from these troubling things!

No need to run far away, though. You can find paradise in the most beautiful bay in Hong Kong — Tai Long Wan (Big Wave Bay) in eastern Sai Kung. Its beaches breathtakingly ring the coastline of Sai Kung like a bracelet. Setting off from Pak Tam Au, climbing over mountain ridges, passing through ancient villages and barren fields, you finally reach an area of sunshine, coastal winds and waves. Here you will be reminded that life can be both as simple and as beautiful as this.

Route:

Sai Kung —(Bus No. 94/96R, 30-40 minutes)→ Start Pak Tam Au —(downhill, 1 hour)→ ❶ Chek Keng —(uphill, 35 minutes)→

❷ Tai Long Au —(downhill, 15 minutes)→ ❸ Tai Long —(flat route, 25 minutes)→ ❹ Tai Wan —(uphill, downhill, 10 minutes)→

❺ Ham Tin Wan —(uphill, downhill, 30 minutes)→ ❻ Sai Wan —(uphill, flat route, 1 hour)→ Finish Chui Tung Au (Sai Wan Ting)

—(bus, 30 minutes)→ Sai Kung

* It takes four hours to cover this walking route.

Having stayed in the concrete jungle too long, I thirsted for relaxation in the countryside. One Sunday when the weather was extremely fine, I could wait no longer and went hiking in Sai Kung with my friend.

Start: Pak Tam Au

From the Sai Kung Pier, Bus No. 94 took us to Pak Tam Au within half an hour. The route to Chek Keng at the second section of the MacLehose Trail lay just to the right of the road. After looking over the tourist map posted there by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, we set off.

Walking along the meandering MacLehose Trail, we noted wild flowers growing on the mountain and breathed in their pleasant fragrances. Since the route is located on the northern Sai Kung peninsula, one can stroll past stunning panoramas of places like To Kwa Peng, Wong Shek (Yellow Stone) Pier, Ko Tong Hau and Tai Tan Hoi (Long Harbour). Though it was already late autumn, we still saw many sailboats moving about in the Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre. It's true that Hong Kong people are very energetic.

➔ *The Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre, one of four of its kind operated by the Leisure & Cultural Services Department, specialises in providing training areas for and courses in canoeing, sailing and windsurfing. Tel: 2328 2311*

Station ❶: Chek Keng

— Centre of Wild Cows and Wilderness Campers

About 40 minutes later, we reached the first stop, Chek Keng. Located deep in Chek Keng Hau of Tai Tan Hoi (Long Harbour), Chek Keng is a calm coastal area. A half-abandoned village of the same name can be found on the seashore. Only a few villagers remain, accompanied by the sea year after year. Nevertheless, they are not as lonely as we might think. Since Chek Keng is a necessary

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stopover for everyone going to Sai Kung East, and Bradbury Hall, a youth centre, sits nearby, the place is as crowded as an urban centre during public holidays. There are two stores serving trekkers. Near a small pier established for the village, verdant mangroves have grown up, showing how clear the seawater is. No wonder the place attracts fishing and shell-digging enthusiasts.

Leaving the village in Chek Keng, we met many hikers and young backpackers. Lots of fields, a flat landscape and an adequate water supply form an ideal environment for both wild cows and wilderness campers. A lot of wilderness campsites could be seen along the way, while cows peacefully consumed grasses.

We went eastward following the trail to reach the end of the coast and chose a path going up the mountain towards Tai Long Au. Gradually, the beach, houses and tents were left behind. We saw steep mountain paths, luxuriant trees and wild grasses, while hearing our own gasps.

➔ *Bradbury Hall (facilities for 100 people and wilderness camping) is only for members of the Youth Hostels Association. Tel: 2788 1638*

Station ❷: Tai Long Au

— a 360-degree Observation Point

Just as our legs grew tired and slowed us down, the trail finally levelled off onto a piece of flatland. Before us lay the highlight of the trip, Tai Long Au. In a pavilion, a father and son were dowsing themselves with and drinking big mouthfuls of water. What a great relief.

After a short rest, we walked to the next hill to take in the surrounding views. With its strategic position, Tai Long Au can claim the most geographical advantages. Looking westward, we saw Chek Keng and its boot-shaped gulf surrounded by green mountains, as placid as a mirror. The view to the east is again completely different. A number of beautiful beaches presented themselves to us. In contrast, Tai Mun Shan, standing 370 metres above sea level, and Nam She Tsim (Sharp Peak), one of the "Three Peaks of the East Sea" at 468 metres, rise in the south and north respectively, both a challenge to hikers. In Tai Long Au, one feels that one has reached the gates to all picturesque sites —

1. **Balancing on the single-plank bridge, an exciting part of the hike to Ham Tin Wan.**
2. **The white sands of Tai Wan, one of the most enchanting beaches in Hong Kong.**
3. **Nam She Tsim, 468 metres high, is irresistible to hikers.**
4. **A jellyfish washed ashore by the waves.**
5. **The breathtaking Tai Long Wan.**
6. **A perfect day for fun with one's pets on the beach.**

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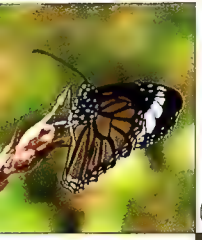


too many directions can be taken.

As we saw the father and son determinedly heading to Nam She Tsim, we decided to follow the original route — to Tai Long Village.

Station ❸: Tai Long
— an Exotic Old Hakka Village

Tai Long is a village with more than 200 years' history. There is a well-known mass hall in this Hakka village. Built by a Catholic missionary in the 1930s, Immaculate Conception Chapel is listed as a third-grade historical building by the Antiquities and Monuments Office. In its heyday, the hall, which could hold over 100 people, was always crowded with Mass attendants. Since the 1980s, villagers have been gradually migrating to urban areas or overseas. Many houses now stand empty and the hall has fallen into disrepair. The hall and the Tai Long village office are located in the same courtyard. The owner of a store situated in the courtyard kindly unlocked the gate and let us enter. The paint on the exterior walls of the hall had completely faded. We looked into the church through a well-secured window at a scene of desolation. The altar and the statue enshrined there were covered in a thick layer of dust, indicating the passage of time.

The owner was talkative and friendly. When he was young, he'd worked in the city for a few decades. Then, tired of stressful city life, he decided to return to his "hometown". It may be difficult to go shopping outside the area since the mountain track is the only way leading to the city centre from the village. Yet, the fresh air and simple, relaxed living style offset the disadvantages.

Just as we were leaving Tai Long, a saying flashed through my mind: "Simple life is beautiful life".

Station ❹: Tai Wan
— Hong Kong's Easternmost Surfing Resort

There are two trails in Tai Long, which lead to Tai Wan and Ham Tin Wan, respectively. People usually go to Ham Tin Wan. Therefore, we decided to visit Tai Wan first since it is comparatively secluded.

When the long, wide, shimmering beach appeared before us, we could not believe our eyes. The beauty of Tai Wan comes from its purity and tranquillity, like those solitary white beaches in eastern Taiwan. Two or three impromptu campsites were scattered on the beach. Enjoying the warm sunshine on the soft sand, the foreign campers wore just enough clothes to cover their most sensitive parts. My friend suddenly took off her shoes and walked along the beach quickly, as happy as a child. Such a pristine place! Such fine weather! I felt the kisses of the coastal winds while gazing out at the crystal blue seawater. No matter how jaded or cynical a person feels, here his or her spirit will soar immediately.

Facing out on the expansive Pacific Ocean, Tai Wan has an open geographical situation. Since it lies directly in the path of the northeast monsoon winds, large waves billow up on the sea, drawing lots of surfers. Western, Japanese, and local surfers all jumped into the sea to play among the waves. Later, I was told Tai Wan is a celebrated surfing resort in Hong Kong.

Station ❺: Ham Tin Wan
— Balancing on a Wooden Bridge

Walking over a headland called Mong Yue Kok (Fish-Watching Corner) at the end of Tai Wan, we reached another famous beach in Tai Long Wan — Ham Tin Wan. Previously called Hoi Ha (Under the Sea), the area had once been farmland. Since the fields were often flooded by seawater, the place was also known as "Ham Tin", meaning "salty field". In time, the new name replaced the old one.

Compared to Tai Wan, Ham Tin Wan is obviously smaller but more bustling, thanks to the opening of two shops. These were bigger than those we'd seen earlier and aroused hikers' appetites with their various dishes. Travellers seated there were mopping up perspiration, ordering dishes, or chatting freely. I almost thought I was in a restaurant in town.

Furthermore, Ham Tin Wan possesses a familiar seaside feature — a single-plank bridge. A pond has formed at the intersection of a few streams. Although it is not deep, it is an inconvenience to travellers. So the locals of Ham Tin Wan erected a wooden bridge across the pond, which allows only one person to pass

The Tai Long Wan Dispute

In April 2000, the Hong Kong Government planned to establish more than 300 village houses in Tai Long Wan and increase the local population in 10 years from 20-plus at that time to about 1,000. As soon as the news was released, it raised great concerns in local biking circles. People argued that the plan would severely destroy the natural landscape and ecosystem of Tai Long Wan. The department in charge of the project received hundreds of complaint e-mails that month which damaged its server. The dispute did not end until April 27, 2001 when the government finally conceded to minimise the area to be developed from 7.88 to 1.9 hectares, including existing village houses and those that had already been granted permission to be built.

at a time. Like my friend, I held my breath crossing the bridge, paying great attention to each step to avoid becoming a "wet duck".

Together with the clear water and soft sand, Tai Chau (Big Island) and Tsim Chau (Sharp Island) out in the bay formed a unique vista.

Station ⑥: Sai Wan
— Soothing Seaside Teahouses

Leaving Ham Tin Wan, we headed uphill again. The view of Ham Tin Wan and Tai Wan as seen from the crest is even more charming. After making another turn, Sai Wan could be seen far off. The beach at Sai Wan is divided into two halves by a small cape. Two streams flow to the beach from the south and north, respectively. The northern one originates from "Double-Deer Gully", well known in Hong Kong hiking circles. Situated deeper in than Tai Wan and Ham Tin Wan, Sai Wan is comparatively more peaceful. Hence, it had been an ideal fishing boat shelter once. Sai Wan's water transport system is limited to boats going between Sai Wan and the Sai Kung Market. With the completion of the High Island Reservoir in 1979, previous water channels were blocked. Now, local villagers have to walk the cement trail connecting Sai Wan to Chui Fung Au.

In Sai Wan Village, there is another abandoned church, the Star of the Sea Mass Centre, built by the Catholic Church in the 1950s. Allegedly, a priest had been giving free lessons to the village children. Later, after most of the villagers had moved away and the priest had grown old, the church was left empty. Wild grasses have taken over and the windows are all rusted. Only the bell hung at the entrance of the church retains its vivid reddish-orange paint, evoking a scene of students playing and running about the building in bygone years.

Among the several stores in the village, two are pleasingly named; Hoi Wan (Sea Gulf) Cafe and Hoi Long (Sea Wave) Cafe remind me of soothing afternoons in Repulse Bay. Hoi Wan Cafe with its sweeping sea view has the best position. One can spend a whole afternoon leisurely reading a book and sipping a drink. Mr. Lai, the cafe's owner, built the white-washed cafe and its fence by himself, as well as placing some plants around it. It is surprising to see such a tasteful establishment in the countryside.

Finish: Sai Wan Ting

From Sai Wan to the last stop, Sai Wan Ting in Chui Fung Au, the first half of the route runs along a lengthy, steep cement path that may take your breath away. Luckily, the latter half of the route is rather flat, as the scenery of the High Island Reservoir dominates the pathway. The High Island Reservoir is the biggest reservoir of its kind in Hong Kong, with the capacity to store as much as 280 million cubic metres of water. From certain perspectives, the blue and green colours reflected in the lake really look like those seen in Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan Province.

Hong Kong is not just a cement jungle, or a city that will soon collapse as some predict. To me, those who make such comments look down on Hong Kong as well as on themselves. Live it up; spend a day immersing yourself in Sai Kung East!

Translated by Kristy Wong

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: Take Bus No. 94 from the Sai Kung Pier to Pak Tam Au. Buses set off every hour from 8:30-17:30; or take Bus No. 96R leaving the Diamond Hill MTR station during public holidays; or, take a minibus to Pak Tam Chung from the Sai Kung Pier, then hire a taxi to Pak Tam Au.

Clothing: Sun hat, hiking shoes, drinking water and food, map.

Note: There are lavatories and stores in Chek Keng, Tai Long, Ham Tin Wan and Sai Wan.

1. **Tai Long Wan is a favourite with locals and foreigners alike.**
2. **As people migrated to urban areas, many farms were abandoned and now wild cows can be seen everywhere.**
3. **The 70-year-old church that is listed as a grade-three historical building by the Antiquities and Monuments Office.**
4. **During public holidays, many hiking teams pass through Tai Long Village to Tai Long Wan.**
5. **Stores in Ham Tin Wan provide adequate food and drink for wilderness campers.**

My Feelings for the
Axu Grassland

Photos & article by Yu Qiong

The author, Yu Qiong, is a native of Shanghai and a student of the Beijing Cinema Institute. Since 1997, she has made frequent visits to many Tibetan communities. With great enthusiasm for their culture, she took photos of the Tibetans' lives and customs. During one of her trips, she stayed alone in the Kangba area for almost a year. She has visited the Axu Grassland, home of King Gesar; Geba, the organisation of the primitive tribe in Shanyan; Dêgê, the birthplace of Kangba culture; and the wonderlands in the Huolong and Duopu gullies little known to outsiders.

I learned about Axu by chance from a friend when I was in Chengdu, capital city of Southwest China's Sichuan Province. Thereafter, I read the story "My Dream of Axu" by Wen Laoda, published together with some beautiful pictures in the magazine *Light & Colour*. Axu, in my imagination, was a world where rust-red streamers fluttered everywhere; on the riverside of the Yalong River, stood ancient trees with ball-shaped crowns; and, there was the gentlemanly Living Buddha, Bajia. This was how my interest in Axu was aroused. Since then I have stepped onto this sacred land many times.

First Impressions

My first visit to Axu was an unexpected one. My original plan was to go to Tibet via Yunnan after visiting Daocheng in Sichuan. On my way, I heard that a large tour group was going to an incarnation ceremony to be held in Axu, the hometown of King Gesar, a legendary Tibetan hero. I thought it would be great to join the group, though usually I prefer to travel alone. So, after leaving Daocheng, I made a detour by scheduled public bus to reach Manigange.

At Haizi Pass I finally caught up with the group which was travelling in three buses and four or five jeeps. At every mountain pass, we released *longdas* (small pieces of paper printed with Tibetan scriptures and propitious patterns). It was during this trip that I encountered Dong Fang for the first time. He is now a travelling painter in Tibet. I later often teased him by reminding him of my first impression of him: at Haizi Pass, he walked in front of our vehicle, with a water bucket in one hand and the hand of a girl in the other.

The Nature of Man

When we arrived at Sanchahe, the Living Buddha Bajia was already waiting there, holding a hada in his hands. Cloaked in a purple Kasaya, he wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses which stood out

against his tanned face. He presented a hada to every guest and greeted us in Han Chinese. The Living Buddha behaved like a gentleman, just as Wen Laoda described in his story.

We turned onto the makeshift road leading to Axu. At the roadsides were many Mani piles and towers hung with scripture banners. Each time we passed one, the people on the buses exclaimed excitedly. There were also Tibetans standing by the road, holding fresh flowers to welcome us. Others, either sitting on the grassland or standing on the roofs of their houses, waved and greeted us loudly. When I asked the Living Buddha later if he had arranged this welcoming ceremony, he said no. It was simply that they all loved their Living Buddha and since we were his guests and friends, they treated us enthusiastically as well.

The people in the vehicles also responded with great enthusiasm. They shouted Tibetan words they had just learnt, "Gati" or "Gamati" while waving the hadas in their hands. Some even jumped off the bus and offered candies to the locals. It was a touching moment. Some young women visitors were moved to tears and they used the hadas to wipe them away. A more outspoken visitor simply shouted loudly, "I love you, Axu!"

Wild and Gallant Kangba Men

It took our bus almost three hours to drive the 30 km mountain road. After numerous turnings, we reached a broad river and advanced along it. I was told it was the Yalong River. After another turn, our eyes brightened. We found ourselves confronted by an expansive hilly grassland. Clusters of earthen houses were scattered along the riverbank. Among them, one row of red houses descended in a line from up on the slope down to the foot of a hill. This was our destination — the Axu Grassland. A few wisps of cloud floated by, blocking the sunshine; in return, the sun tinged the clouds' edges in gold.

The sound of horses' hooves drew me back from my drifting thoughts. A group of Kangba men, all on horseback, were heading right for us, handsome and gallant. Dressed in purple Tibetan fur overcoats accessorised with a knife, everyone had a flag held in his hand and a gun slung across his back. Their long hair was blown back by the wind as their horses galloped towards us. Then, we got off the bus and each mounted a Kangba man's horse. Riding with them, we dashed towards the Axu Grassland.

The residents of the grassland are all attractive, with brown skin, big eyes, straight noses, and slightly projecting cheekbones — a standard feature of classical sculpture. In addition, their thick, well-shaped lips form frequent smiles, exposing their white teeth.

The grassland people take great care in their dress. Both men and women wear cowboy hats, and they decorate their clothes with multi-coloured silk. Kangba girls weave their hair into numerous thin

1. The troupe of gallant Kangba men on horseback.
2. Showing respect for the late Panchen Lama.
3. The statue of King Gesar on horseback stands in the centre of the exhibition hall of the museum dedicated to him.
4. A Tibetan mother dresses her daughter for a festive occasion.

braids. They fix a piece of yellow amber or green turquoise on top of their heads and a strand of pink coral pearls around their necks. They also hang many silver ornaments from their dresses, which jingle when they ride a horse. When they meet strangers, they always produce sweet smiles. Kangba men like to wear a bright red hero's knot on their heads, an exquisitely wrought knife at their waists and handmade, high-legged boots. Sometimes they expose their broad, well-tanned chests to display their masculinity. Kangba men like to snort tobacco, which they keep in a white plastic bottle, or a yak horn, or a silver snuffbox. They place a little on a fingernail and inhale deeply. Immediately, a thunderous sneeze erupts, followed by a happy expression. This is the characteristic Kangba man — even his sneeze is wild.

Lifelike Sculptures

At the incarnation ceremony held for the King Gesar Memorial Museum, a hearty grin finally appeared on the Living Buddha Bajia's tired face. The Living Buddha had worked painstakingly for several years to establish this museum. Through various channels, he finally pooled enough money together. In his speech, Bajia said that King Gesar was an important figure in Tibetan history, and *The Story of King Gesar* is the longest epic in the world. The Axu Grassland on the bank of the Yalong River is the king's birthplace. As the Living Buddha of the Chacha Temple in Axu, Bajia bore the responsibility of restoring the King Gesar Memorial Museum, which had been destroyed during the "cultural revolution".

After a brief but solemn opening ceremony, we toured the museum. The 100 newly-sculpted statues in the temple were all done by Tiejia, a famous Kangba artist personally invited by the Living Buddha to work on the project, which took a year to complete. Tiejia used the sticky earth of the grassland, containing grasses and roots, to create the colourful statues. Furthermore, he concealed scriptures and excerpts from *The Story of King Gesar* inside the statues.

The sculptures are all amazingly lifelike, each with a different expression. At the centre of the exhibition hall is a statue of King Gesar on horseback, wearing a helmet and armour and wielding a sword. At his sides are statues of his mother, favourite wife and 13 generals.

Local Tibetans came to the museum to worship King Gasar in endless numbers. The Living Buddha had also invited a famous storyteller to sing the epic and a dance troupe to perform the mask dance of *King Gesar* at the ceremony. Some herdsmen sang songs, too.

A Restless Night

The residents of the grassland are honest and hospitable. Wherever we went, the herdsmen greeted us warmly and invited us into their yurts. They brought out

all the best food they had to treat us, such as cream tea, qingke wine, yak meat, yoghurt and many snacks I could not name. Sometimes, in order to not disappoint my new young friends, I visited their homes one after another. In the end, I had to retreat because my stomach was too full. Interestingly, I met an old lady I had seen begging in Yushu the previous year. What an unexpected occurrence! When we recognised each other, I almost cried. I gave her all the candies in my pocket and she offered me a bowl of hot cream tea.

Night fell and we visitors all sat around the stove in a yurt, chatting. Now and then, some of us ran to the next yurt to "steal" some wine that the Living Buddha had prepared for us. We drank from the bottle in turns and emptied one flask after another. At midnight, stimulated by the alcohol, someone played guitar and the rest of us sang all kinds of songs. Soon after we returned to our yurt where 40 or 50 people stayed together, most of us fell asleep, emitting various noises: snoring, sleep talking, teeth grinding, whistles, laughter...

Only in Axu can you find so much happiness and freedom.

My Second Trip to Axu

My second trip to Axu took place by pure chance. I was visiting Zhuqing Township when a jeep stopped at the township government

office. The driver, Mr. Pu, was one of my new friends. He called to me as soon as he saw me, saying that he would take me to the Axu Grassland. I picked up my luggage and went with him.

It had been raining for more than two weeks and the problems of the makeshift road to Axu were apparent. Its surface was covered by a thin layer of muddy water, beneath which were many potholes. Riding in the jeep, it felt like the automobile was disco dancing, swinging from side to side, sometimes even turning 270 degrees. Thanks to Pu's courage and skilful driving, we avoided many dangers.

The Living Buddha Bajia was standing at his doorway when we arrived. Sitting in his simple but elegantly furnished Tibetan-style living room, sipping hot cream tea and eating various snacks, the fear I had felt on the road immediately dissipated.

After a while, a man in Han-style clothes entered the house and whispered to the Living Buddha. A bus carrying a group of photographers had been following the same road as our jeep. As the driver was not familiar with this area and the road was bad, he decided he could not go any further after they reached the Yalong River. The group's leader decided to turn back. On hearing this, the Living Buddha was deeply disappointed. To welcome these visitors, he had been working for a week to erect yurts and prepare yak meat, yoghurt and many other delicacies. He is such a sincere man.

For those of us who had arrived, the visit was very instructive. I learned more about King Gesar, his birthplace and the Living Buddha Bajia.

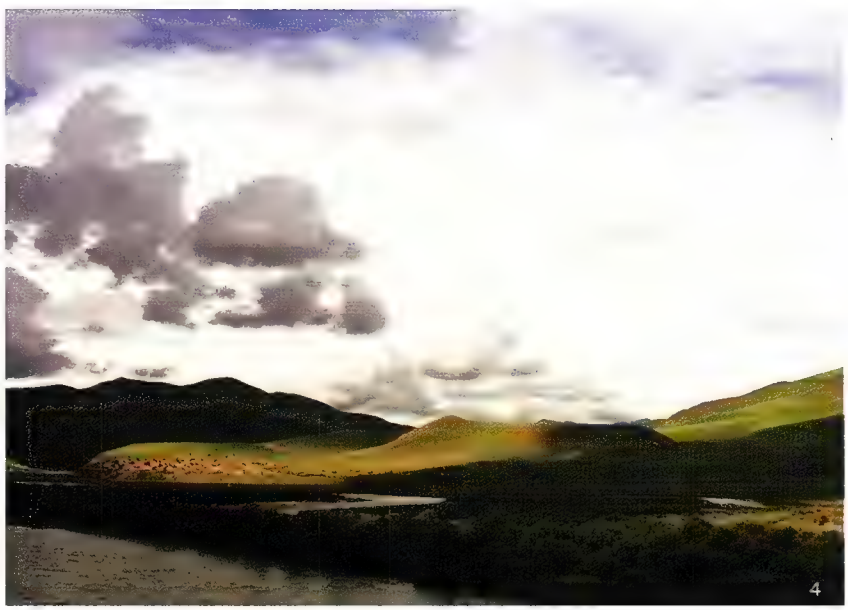
Axu, Again

My third trip to Axu took place one winter. When I told my Tibetan friends who were with me then, they all tried to persuade me not to go, saying it would be severely cold. Nevertheless, I was on the road again.

By coincidence, I met the Living Buddha Bajia at the county seat of Dêgê. After graduating from the China Buddhism High College, Bajia was elected vice-chairman of the county's People's Congress. That was why one of my friends jokingly called him "Chairman Ba". The Living Buddha told me he would return to Axu in a few days and suggested I wait to get a lift with him.

The Quer Mountain Pass at 4,982 metres above sea level is known as a "heavenly danger" on the northern route of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway. It is not the height but the imposing topography that has earned it this description. When the 18th Army of the PLA entered Tibet to build this highway, many soldiers lost their lives. Zhang Fulin was one of them and a monument to him stands at the foot of Quer Mountain. Only after our jeep had successfully traversed the mountain road on the Quer did my heart feel at ease.

1. Oh, this sweet is delicious!
2. Lamas blow huge horns at the incarnation ceremony for the King Gesar Memorial Museum.
3. Preparing wool while enjoying the sunshine, a common winter pastime for the Axu people.
4. The Axu Grassland on the Yalong River.



Axu Covered in Ice and Snow

At Manigange, there was ice and snow everywhere and whenever you breathed, fine ice chips lodged in your nostrils. You did not want to expose any part of your body to the cold air. The herdsmen wore long coats of goatskin; some wore lambskin for lighter and more refined coats. Their hats were made of red silk and fur. One hat could be worn in five or six different ways. It was very comforting to cover your ears with such a fur hat, as the wind on the grassland was strong and biting. Those who could not afford fur hats wore woolen ones imported from the Han area. When they pulled these far down over their necks, leaving only two eyeholes, they looked like robbers.

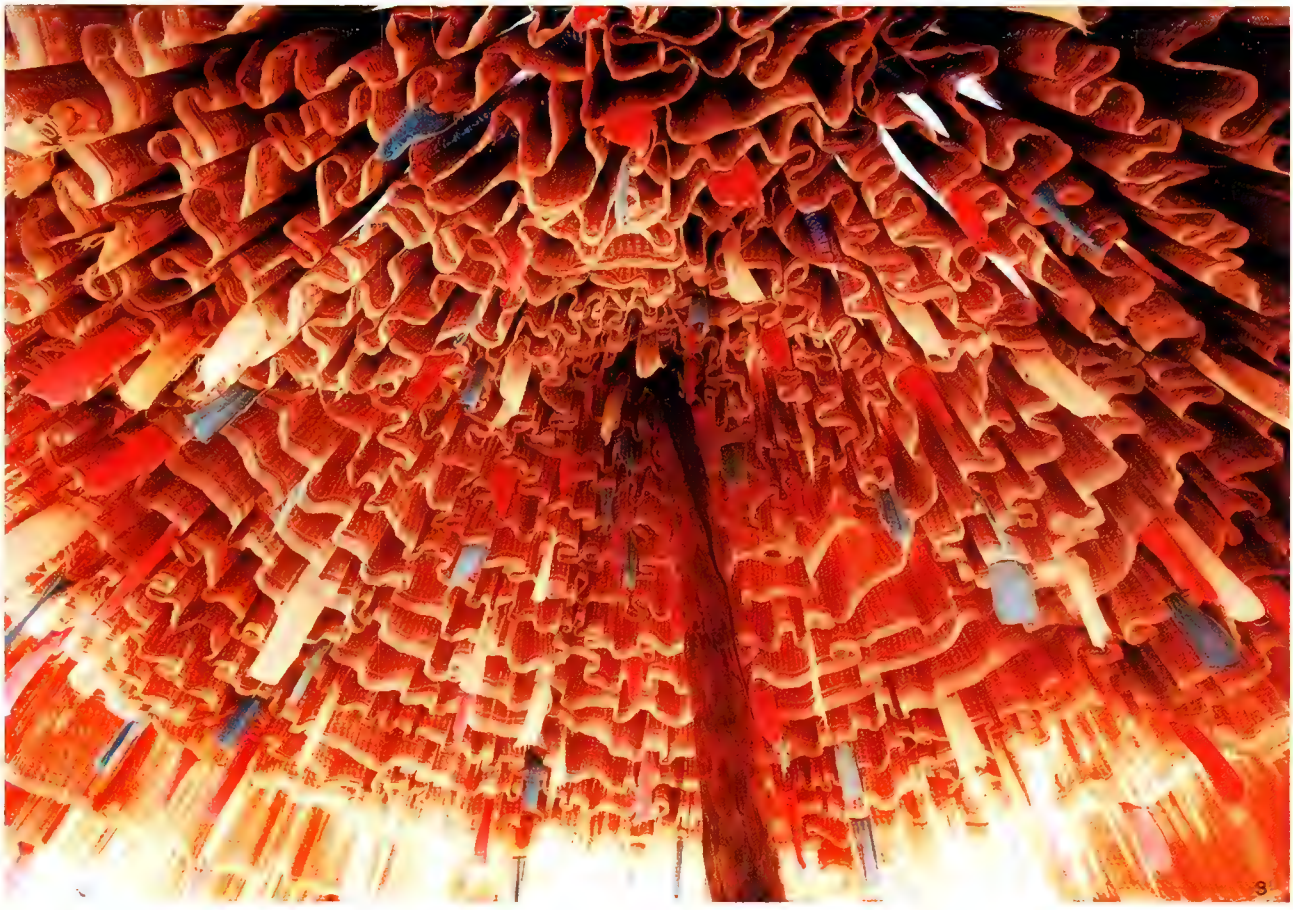
If Axu in summer can be described as an attractive young woman wearing heavy makeup, Axu in winter is an ice statue of a delicate girl, plain but lovely. The distant hills were veiled in silky white, making the red walls of the Chacha Temple even more eye-catching. Many people, old and young, were circling the white pagoda of the temple. Clutching their prayer wheels, they sang songs as they walked. The water of the Yalong River was as blue as jadeite. Huge pieces of ice on the river, looking like white jade, floated downstream, sending out crackling sounds. A flock of wild pigeons searched for food in the wood. When disturbed, they flew off immediately, shaking snow off the trees. Glinting in the sunshine, the drifting snow seemed to be shining, fallen stars.

Some people were cleaning snow off their roofs. Most, however, were squatting on big rocks at the foot of an earthen wall, reciting sutras while swinging their prayer wheels. Some were making thread from wool; some just watched people passing by. The river in front of the white pagoda was completely frozen into a natural skating rink. Children played on it, chasing one another. Now and again, someone fell, but it did not matter; he or she just got up and continued the game.

My Tears Rolled Down

When I was in Axu this time, I liked to sit near the pagoda to watch people circling while they prayed and children romping on the ice. It was a great pleasure to absorb the highland sunshine. The Living Buddha had established a free Tibetan class in his temple, with lamas who had received better educations working as teachers. The children's textbooks were folded pieces of cardboard on which the 30 letters of the Tibetan alphabet were written. At noon, when school ended, the children flocked to the pagoda to make a circle around it. When they discovered me, they indulged their curiosity and eventually we became good friends. One day, I asked the youngest among them, five-year-old Quzhen, to read out the Tibetan letters. No sooner than her crispy voice began forming the sounds, all the other kids followed, reading in concert. I had never heard such heavenly voices as the children's and, for quite a while, they echoed beautifully on the vast grassland. Tears were rolling down my cheeks before I realised it.

Every evening, I sat before the stove with the Living Buddha and learned a lot about the local customs. Chacha Temple was building a third temple for its monks' meditations. The Living Buddha planned to commission a bronze statue of King Gesar on a galloping horse to be the landmark of the king's hometown. He also mentioned that the education level on the grassland was low and he wanted to establish a Hope School to teach in both Tibetan and Han Chinese. He had many other plans to develop the grassland — to build a



hydroelectricity station so that the residents could watch TV; to construct a highway between Sanchahe and Axu; and to introduce a local telephone system. I saw the wrinkles on the young Living Buddha's forehead and knew they reflected his concern for his hometown and its people.

Was I Stupid?

Gama had presented me with the most brilliant smiles during my first visit to Axu. I was deeply impressed by his sweet face and unruly hair. On my last visit, I tried to find him. But from one of his friends, I learnt that he had become a lama in Chacha Temple. His mother told me that Gama was an only child. As they were too poor to afford his schooling, they sent him to the temple, where he would at least learn Tibetan. My heart sank. If possible, I would have been willing to support his schooling so that he would not have to become a lama. Later, when I called my friend, Dong Fang, and told him about this, he laughed. He said I was too stupid, and that I should feel happy for Gama instead, because the boy had been relieved. I could not understand him. Was I really stupid? Why couldn't I see the bright smile of Gama anymore?

I said farewell to the Axu Grassland and boarded the return jeep. But my heart was not with me.

Fortunately, I now have a new excuse for making another trip to Axu. In the coming summer, the meditation temple of Chacha Temple will be completed and an incarnation ceremony will be held there.

1. Gama, a boy with a sweet smile and such long hair that I mistook him for a girl.
2. Despite the chill, people circle the white pagoda as usual.
3. Numerous rust-red Mani banners create a magnificent view.
4. Gama's face wears a smile no more; he has become a lama.

Children in Jubilant Celebrations

While traditional cultural legacies nourish children's souls, the jubilant galas leave them with unforgettable memories.

Photos & article by Wang Min

People in northern Fujian Province have retained their traditional lifestyle. Today, they still celebrate many folk festivals passed down from their ancestors. For every such event, the villagers busy themselves making cakes and preparing dishes of chicken and port. They also help plan the community activities, such as a parade and an opera performance. Whatever the festival, its ceremonies have one purpose: to show that the people here have lived in peace and unity since days gone by and that they wish for an even happier life in the future.

As Joyous as the Spring Festival

One morning in spring, upon hearing that the Double Third Day (the third day of the third lunar month) was going to be celebrated in Xuyang Village, I rushed there along with a few friends who were also photography fans. Xuyang is located in the suburbs of Nanping, on the upper reaches of the Minjiang River in Fujian Province, 160 km from the capital city of Fuzhou. On the third day of the third lunar month, the locals light a big lantern made of bamboo, on which the legendary Master Zhenwu's name is written, and hang it from a long pole. A procession led by the lantern, in which participants carry floating platforms on their shoulders, seven-coloured flags or their ancestors' tin ceremonial instruments, parades through the village streets and lanes. The annual ceremony held on this specific day commemorates Master Zhenwu's subduing of the pig monster, which had been assaulting the local people, and the return of peace to the region. As the parade passes the villagers' doorways, residents in each house come out to welcome the troupe. They first light incense sticks to worship Zhenwu, and then set off fireworks to expel evil spirits. The sacred ceremony is also a prayer for good harvest and prosperity.

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It was already noon when we arrived at the village. Every family had begun their celebration, which was as jubilant as that for the New Year. They opened their doors and treated their friends and relatives to home-cooked dishes. Lunch was also offered to visitors free of charge at the village's administrative office. Before I finished my meal, the sounds of excited children and beating drums came from the auditorium next door. Thinking that the parade had begun, I grasped my camera and ran out of the building. There, in the warm spring sunlight, a group of children with big smiles on their faces were running in and out of the auditorium. Some were waiting for their turn to be made up, some were playing with the drumsticks, and others were just running here and there, overjoyed.

Children Were the Happiest

I raised my camera and focused on those happy children. While the adults busily prepared for the folk festival, the children took the greatest enjoyment from it. Though they did not understand the essence of the ceremonial celebration, they were the main act of the whole show.

The community celebration cannot go on without the children. In this village, children lead the parade procession. They hold seven-coloured flags, the front board and ancient spears and axes, signifying that they are the road openers, or the vanguards. On the floating platforms carried by the adults, small kids sat dressed up as figures from legends, operas or history. Through personal participation, these children will learn about their folk tradition, carry on the cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations.

The young villagers were really hard working. Soon after school

finished, they carried their school bags home and went to the village auditorium to get the flags or boards they would use in the parade, many of them taking no time for lunch. The younger kids who would be carried on the floating platforms were so small and shy that they arrived at the administrative office escorted by their parents or grandparents for their makeup. But once they were fixed on the platforms, dressed up as various characters, they became serious actors and actresses and enjoyed themselves heartily, putting aside their timidity.

The coloured flags fluttered under the blue sky as the parade wound through the village, where every single lane was drenched in the festive atmosphere. Most eye-catching were the children. As they passed by, a surge of pride and happiness filled the onlookers, while parents gazed at their own kids.

When I was picking up my pictures from a local developing shop, by coincidence a middle-aged man visiting the same shop glanced at the smiling faces in my photos and exclaimed: "Isn't this the Double Third Festival in Xuyang? I used to carry such a coloured flag there when I was small."

Tips for the Traveller

Time: The third day of the third lunar month.

Admission: The ceremonial parade in Xuyang Village is free of charge.

Transport: Go to Fuzhou first and then take a train or bus to Nanping; three hours. Tourists visiting Wuyi Mountain can also reach Nanping by train or bus. Bus No. 10 runs from Nanping's Jiangbin Road to Xiadao Town via Xuyang Village. Arrive before noon to have the lunch that the hospitable villagers prepare for their guests.

Accommodation: Hotels abound in Nanping. Among the star-rated ones are the Minbei, Yancheng Zhaoxiang and Nanping, with standard room rates from 180 to 250 yuan. There are also less expensive hostels.

1. Lord Bao, a historical figure representing justice, on a floating platform. The carrier is usually the father, an uncle or other relative of the young actor.
2. Boys bearing ancient-style flags.
3. As the parade starts before noon, many children do not have time for lunch before making up.
4. Drums are for the old men in the parade. Before the ceremony begins, the boys are having their turn to play with the drums.
5. The parade's vanguard, or road openers, marching ahead of the procession.

Experiences in Surmounting Difficulties

Editors' Note: As reporters we encounter many unexpected difficulties, but one way or another we endure and overcome them. Perhaps these short stories of ours will help readers face difficulties and march positively forward in the year 2002.

Getting Injured on a Journey

Article by Shi Baoxiu

One winter 10 years ago, Mr. Hu Wugong and I went to the Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province on assignment. As we rode bicycles through the snow towards Humming Sand Dune, we decided to stop in the village to see how the local farmers cope with snowy weather.

Just as we entered the village, a young woman stopped us and asked: "Do the two of you want to ride a camel?" We said we had bicycles. "Those won't do! You can't go to the Humming Sand Dune unless you ride a camel. This is a new rule set recently." As we stood there feeling puzzled, an honest-looking man walked out of the courtyard and chimed in: "That's true. I happen to have a camel at home. It can carry two or three people. It's only 10 yuan to go there and come back." We accepted the offer and he enthusiastically helped us onto the camel's back.

But after the camel had moved forward a dozen steps and we clicked our cameras several times, we suddenly felt heaven and earth change places, as if an earthquake was taking place. The camel broke into a gallop and it kicked backwards with its hind legs. Then suddenly, together with the saddle, we were flung from the camel's back, made a beautiful arc in mid-air and landed with a thud on the frozen ground. I felt a piercing pain in one of my arms, and it was a long time before I could stand up. With hands pressed to his aching chest, Wugong could not straighten his back. The shutter handle of the camera lying on his chest was bent 90 degrees. Supporting each other, we struggled back to the man's house. The young woman cried out, "What should we do, Dad?" The man murmured a few words in her ear and she left hurriedly.

Before long a man in a Western-style jacket and tie and army trousers entered. We knew at once he was a village administrative clerk. At the sight of us, he began to ask: "What did you come here for? Do you have certificates? Why did you take pictures as you rode the camel? The camel shied, didn't it?" What on earth was he talking about? Could the click of a camera shutter make a camel shy? I handed him my press card, and he snorted: "From 'China Tourism'? Why did you come to tour on a snowy day like this?" Hu Wugong then showed him his certificate as a correspondent for the Xinhua News Agency. The village official immediately stopped snorting. He quickly turned to face the camel man and, pointing an accusing finger at him, shouted: "Send them to the county hospital quickly! The most important thing now is to help them!"

The Humming Sand Dune

A tractor usually used to transport manure and earth carried us to the county hospital. X-rays showed that a large portion of the soft tissue of Wugong's chest had been injured, while my elbow joint had been fractured. The doctor rapidly wrapped up my arm.

After lunch we had a rest in a restaurant. When Wugong went outside to repair his camera, the man and his daughter argued that the treatment expenses should be shared by the two parties. But I said the whole bill was only 70 yuan, and moreover our injuries required that we convalesce by resting and being taken care of, which meant asking them for compensation. The father and daughter pretended to be indignant and wronged, saying that they would not let the matter pass easily and would ask their relatives to come over to reason with us. Then, they stormed out the door. When Wugong came back, he blamed me for letting them leave. "Why did you let them go so easily? They didn't have a license for renting their camel and they cheated us. I asked some local people on the street and they all said there was no such rule about having to ride a camel onto the Humming Sand Dune."

Groaning with pain, we eventually started off from Dunhuang, travelled to Anxi, Jiuquan, Jiayuguan.... and completed our mission in 15 days.

Although I could not move my bandaged arm, I could still climb the Humming Sand Dune and the Wuqiao Ridge covered in the deep snow. Still, it was very inconvenient to handle my camera manually. Before taking a picture, I had to get the distance through visual estimation and then make any adjustments one-handed before raising the camera to check the view. If it was not in focus, I had to walk forwards or backwards to adjust it. For each photo I took, I repeated this procedure many times.

But what really annoyed us was that after we developed the films back home, we realised that the camel we had ridden had not been tamed and had only just been bought from the grassland. A tamed camel, just like oxen, must have a willow ring inserted in the nose, with a rope tied to it, but the one we rode had a rope tied around its neck and head, with no nose ring. We were fooled into riding an untamed camel; no wonder we were thrown off and hurt.

The Story about My Broken English

Article by Huang Yanhong

Several years ago when I visited Australia, the English language was my biggest obstacle. My listening comprehension was so poor that I could catch perhaps one-tenth of what I might understand by reading.

After checking into a hotel, I wanted to know which places were good to visit, but the answer was too fast for me to catch. If I were to ask a few more times, the speaker might cast me a scornful look. In order to save face, I thought of a way to cope — whenever I registered or made an inquiry at a hotel, I would first ask, "Do you speak Chinese?" If the clerk said no, I then asked, "Do you understand Spanish?" If not, I would say: "It seems I have to talk to you in English." It gave the impression that I could speak four or five languages, among which English was my weakest. Then the speaker would answer me slowly. Of course, if the speaker had said, "Wait a moment, please. I'll find someone who can speak Spanish," I would have had to flee.

I roamed the streets and now and then asked directions in English. Everyone I spoke to was friendly and enthusiastic. The only trouble was that they all answered very quickly, and I could only catch the first word of anything they said. I would end up asking many people for the same directions.

I felt puzzled because in China when a foreigner asks the way in the bits of Chinese they have learnt, I listen patiently and then answer in simple Chinese or English. Why wasn't I treated the same way when I went abroad? Some time later, I discovered the crucial cause of the problem: although my English was not good, I spoke it perfectly when I repeated again and again the same questions. My pronunciation was not bad as I had spent one month memorising some common words before the trip. As a result, when I opened my mouth to speak English, people assumed I was fluent and answered my questions at a normal speed.

Still worse, I had to listen to them attentively and wear a smile on my face and keep nodding my head, all of which gave the false assumption that I understood them very well!

Once I realised this, I spoke slowly, even if it was a familiar sentence, and pretended to stammer, adding gestures like a deaf-mute.

The method worked. I no longer got rapid answers, but simple sentences instead. From then on I had no problems when asking directions, but after each encounter, I would repeat what I had said at a normal speed lest I became a real stammering English speaker!

Travelling with broken English

Now I have learned that when you know a few words and can read a foreign language, it does not mean that you know the language at all.

The Qomolangma

A 'Lack of Oxygen' in the Mind

Article by Dianna Lau

In August last year I took a cross-country tour along the Yunnan-Tibet route together with a team of four other people of different backgrounds (Han, Tibetan and Japanese). During the month-long journey we got to know each other's personalities and lifestyles and overcame many unanticipated difficulties. In the process, instead of suffering from altitude sickness, I was puzzled by a conflict with one of my fellow team members....

On the second day, we drove into the magnificent Hengduan Mountains and stopped at a slope. Some of us got out to take pictures. All of a sudden I could hear things being dropped on the ground. I looked back and was surprised to see our Tibetan driver cleaning out the vehicle, casually throwing rubbish anywhere. Most of the trash was plastic which would remain there indefinitely. Unable to bear such "savage" behaviour, I immediately looked for a large bag, picked up and put the garbage into it, and took the bag back to the vehicle.

After this, the driver and I had unspoken feelings of mutual resentment; he probably thought I, an "arrogant" woman from a modern city, disdained him, and I could not bear to see him working in ecotourism with no sense of environmental protection. Without saying a word to each other, we continued our journey. We sat in the cramped vehicle for over 10 hours every day. The tense atmosphere inside formed a sharp contrast to the beautiful, expansive scenery outside.

Every day, the driver continued to cast out the garbage as he pleased, and I continued to pick it up and put it into the bag. After awhile, I began to feel that I was the one responsible for the tension. Why am I so angry that others don't follow my lifestyle? (There is lack of respect.) Why have I allowed my bad mood to affect my fellow team members? (Selfishness.) Lying in bed inside the Rongbu Monastery on Qomolangma more than 5,000 metres above sea level, I could not sleep, partly due to a lack of oxygen at this altitude, but mostly because of these questions racking my brain.

The next day I watched the peak of Qomolangma gradually unveil its pure and holy face. It seemed to say: May all people open the treasure-house which we all received from birth, the mind. The broad mind respects and forgives, and the only thing that can open this treasure-house is our selfless, loving care.

Once my thinking was straightened out, I calmly went to chat with the driver. For the rest of our journey, although the littering continued, the situation improved.

Going to Zhanli in the Mud

Article by Chan Yat Nin

Zhanli, a village inhabited by the Dong people, is hidden deep in the mountains of Congjiang County in southeast Guizhou. Here the villagers have used a series of old birth control methods handed down from generation to generation to keep their population growth rate at zero. So, even with their limited resources, they live comfortably.

I knew that range after range of mountains and meandering streams separated the ancient village from the outside world and kept this mysterious haven of peace and happiness unchanged, and it was inevitable that we must climb the high mountains and cross deep rivers to get to the place. Worse than that, the area was typical of Guizhou, having "no three fine days (in a row) and no three square feet of flat ground". Rain had poured for 10 days straight, leaving the mountain road muddy. People in the county town shook their heads at hearing our plan to hike to Zhanli, saying, "You mustn't do that!" They said even after the rain stops, you had to wait for a few more days.

But I had no time to spare and all my companions were resolved to go "even if it rained dog dung". We began our preparations; we bought enough glutinous rice and cooked meat (things the locals take on their journeys) and rain gear. More importantly, most of us bought rustic-looking but very practical spiked shoes.

We first took a bus to a reservoir in the mountains, from where we rode a boat upstream. Forty minutes later, we left the boat and embarked on a winding path. We had to climb several peaks which normally took about two hours. Unfortunately, our photographic equipment was too heavy, so we asked the boatman to carry it for us but his wife volunteered to take the load first. She wore a pair of slippers and, after a few steps, her feet sank into the mud and she could not pull them out. We laughed, asking the boatman: "Why let your wife suffer?" The boatman took over the load. He was wearing a pair of high-legged, rubber boots. Of all of us, he seemed the best prepared. But his boots did not work either on the muddy road. After moving ahead cautiously by shuffling back and forth for several hundred metres, he could not move another inch. Just as we were caught in this dilemma, a man of the Miao ethnic group from Fuzhong Village appeared and, after sizing up our problem, took the heavy load and toted it for us. Wearing a pair of boots with iron grippers strapped to the soles, he walked on steadily, leaving six deep holes in the mud with every step. He looked very professional.

Slipping around on a muddy trail

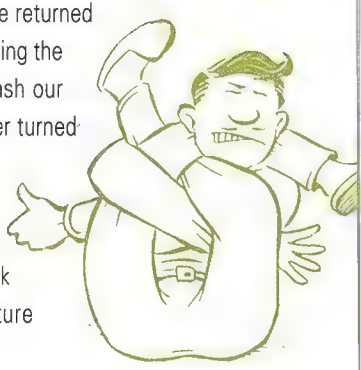
Visiting villages in the mountains

The "road" was difficult beyond description. It was actually a trail trodden by cattle. The steep places were covered by many two-foot-long tracks left by the cattle; you could see where some had lost their footing. At the fairly even places, there were ankle-deep ruts in the mud. The squishy mud seeped into our shoes, making our feet slip around inside them. My shoes were "sub-professional" in that the dense spikes on the soles left holes in the mud. Poor Miss Ling of our group had the worst time. Having failed to buy any spiked shoes in the county town, she had great difficulty and fell several times. Though a staunch young woman, she could not help shedding tears.

At noon we reached Fuzhong Village — the "midway island" in this sea of mud. We stopped for lunch. With a ball of glutinous rice in one hand and a piece of meat in the other, we savagely wolfed down our food. Afterwards, we used a bamboo ladle to drink from a well. What a picnic!

Luckily, the rest of the road was less steep. However, once we had relaxed a bit, we began to feel cold — our rain gear seemed feeble against the continuous downpour; we were all drenched, looking as if we had been wrestling in the mud. Even our camera bags became wet, though tightly wrapped with plastic sheets. By now, the temperature had dropped to 10°C. We shivered with cold in the wind. The two-hour journey took us a full three hours. When we arrived in Zhanli, the first thing we did was dry our cameras in the villagers' fire pit. Fortunately, the cameras still worked, or we would have come all this way in vain. As if our spirit had moved Heaven, the rain let up for about 10 minutes, so we took the opportunity to shoot the scene of golden rice ears hanging on the several-hundred-metres-long crop shelves, the most magnificent "crop-airing project" I had ever seen.

Treading the same muddy road, we returned to the riverside where, instead of boarding the boat, we walked into the water to wash our shoes and trouser legs. The clear water turned yellowish-brown in an instant.



Afterwards I fell ill for 10 days and coughed myself hoarse. My Guizhou friends cured me with their folk remedies: cupping and ear-acupuncture therapy.

An Instant Change of Mood

Article by Chu Kit

My friends all envy me for my good job, "touring mountains and rivers, enjoying the beauty of nature", and "travelling north and south to seek pleasure". They always say to me, "You are happy indeed!" Yes, it is a pleasant and enjoyable experience to travel. But sometimes I feel unavoidably tired and have sulking fits....

I remember one spring I went to cover stories in southern China and after a fortnight arrived in Suzhou. One day I went out as usual to take photos. I felt a bit tired and it was raining. It was still quite cold in early spring. When it rained, the temperature dropped sharply. My clothes were not warm enough, and buffeted by wind and rain, I shivered with cold. Then, because of the rain, my planned itinerary was cancelled. Standing on a quiet street, I thought of the filthy, unbearable hotel. (During the long May Day holidays, every hotel was filled to capacity, and the prices were raised. It took a long time to find one with "reasonable" rates, but it was poorly managed.) With the camera bag weighing down my shoulders, I felt at a loss, not knowing where to go. "What am I doing? What have I come here for?" I could not help asking myself. My mood suddenly dropped very low.

One feels moody on a cloudy day

Just as I was considering whether to go back to the cold, mouldy hotel, a bookstore came into sight, and I saw lights and people inside. Feeling a surge of warmth, I instinctively walked in. There were not many people there, but everyone was bent over a book. I walked slowly past the shelves, taking a sweeping look at the many books by famous authors. Gradually I warmed up again and my mind became calm. I thought to myself: although it is raining outside, I can't spend my time doing nothing, and it's no good to let a bad mood expand unchecked. I made up my mind to find a good book.

Heaven helps those who help themselves. In the sea of books, I finally found one I liked. After paying for it, I took the book and walked over to sit down in a nearby fast-food restaurant and ordered a familiar meal. The book was about the history of Suzhou. As I opened it, the ancient city's past, which the writer described with great feeling, unfolded before me. Gradually the city took shape. With some food for thought, I did not feel lost anymore.

Through the bright French windows, I saw the quiet and desolate streets; it was still raining drearily. But my mood had changed completely.

A Lesson in Perspective

Article by Tsang Po Ki

Last spring I made an independent, trans-border tour of Guangxi and Vietnam. Since I would be travelling alone, all my relatives and friends worried about me (especially because I have the countenance of a girl who is easily fooled). To be honest, personal safety and property did not concern me. What worried me most was how to explore and take beautiful pictures on the trip.

To begin my tour, I took a boat from Guilin along the Lijiang River via Caoping, Yangti and Xingping to Yangshuo. The weather was rather bad that day and seriously affected my ability to take photos. Upon returning to Guilin, to make up for what I had missed, I consulted a map to find the local cultural centre, because the local photographers' society might have an office there. I hoped to gather some photos from the society, but when I arrived I learnt that the a photo exhibition had just concluded (what bad luck!). I jotted down the photographers' addresses and asked the museum to contact them for me. (Consequently none of the photographers could be reached.)

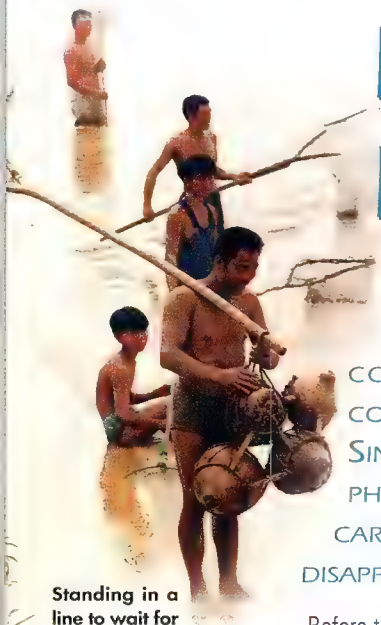
I left with a sigh. Outside, it rained and the road before me seemed endless. According to my schedule, I would leave for Beihai two days later, but I hesitated, wondering if I should stay on until the weather improved. However, if I waited, I would waste valuable time and expenses. So I left reluctantly. By the time I reached Beihai, it had become fine in Guilin. Instantly, negative thoughts such as "God makes fun of me!", "Golden opportunities run away from me!", whirled through my mind like wild torrents. With no one to complain to, I became unhappy, listless and dispirited, and even thought of giving up the whole journey.

I had to calm myself or I might do something foolish. Lying in bed, I tried to relax and went over my confused thoughts to find the root of my problem. I laughed at myself for my naivetè, in which I even let something as uncontrollable as weather affect my mood. I was not usually a person to indulge in a fit of pique, but why did I behave like that? If one can't control one's own mood, how can she do her job? How can she experience the true, the good and the beautiful in life? These thoughts went through my mind like a stern warning to enlighten me, and I suddenly saw the light.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Fish Jumping on the Yellow River — a Lost Scene

Photos & article by Yang Xingfang



Standing in a line to wait for the fish.

THE XIAOLANGDI WATER CONSERVATION PROJECT WAS COMPLETED IN OCTOBER 1999. SINCE THEN THE FORMER NATURAL PHENOMENON OF YELLOW RIVER CARP JUMPING IN THE WATER HAS DISAPPEARED.

Before the construction of the dam, on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month in the ancient river town of Potou, tens of thousands of carp jumped up out of the turbulent Yellow River, their scales shining in the sun, forming a magnificent spectacle. The local people called this "a floating picture of Yellow River fish".

Folk legend says that chaste trees are fatal to carp. Around this time the chaste trees on the Yellow River banks bloom in riots, emitting irresistible fragrances. The carp in the river who were ready to breed were attracted by the aroma and jumped out of the water one after another; some even landed on the banks. They did it in such an ineluctable way, as if they were going to meet their lovers and nothing could stop them, not even extreme dangers. It was not a single fish, nor tens of them, but the whole lot in the river doing the same thing at the same moment — trying to jump through the "dragon gate", as described in Chinese mythologies.

There is a scientific explanation for the extraordinary picture once created by the Yellow River carp. Potou is the intersecting point of the lower and middle reaches of the Yellow River. Upstream, a deep valley hedged by high mountains extends 50 km to Sanmen (Three Gate) Gorge. Formerly, the river in this section was torrential with many dangerous shoals. During the sixth lunar month, the water volume in the Yellow River increases remarkably. Before the Xiaolangdi Dam was built in late 1999, the fish swimming down from the middle reaches all hid themselves at the bottom of the river to avoid inhaling the muddy waves created at this time. After passing the last gorge, the mud and sand carried along by the rapids began to sink into the riverbed at Potou, and the carp hidden there faced the danger of being suffocated. Struggling for survival, they all jumped up; many became faint during this process, either choked by the muddy water or pressed by fellow fish in an overcrowded school. The phenomenon usually lasted anywhere from two to eight hours.

During this season, people from surrounding areas all came to the spot, either to see the stunning display or to catch fish. Excellent swimmers simply could not wait. As soon as they arrived at the riverbank, they hastily shed their clothes down to their underwear and jumped into the yellow waves to swim towards the thickest crowds of fish. Some prudent villagers chose to use gourd floats to catch fish in a safer and steadier way. Binding together several large, dried bottle gourds, the fisherman then fixed this onto his body and rafted into the river, scooping up fish one by one. Despite having mud splashed all over their bodies, all the fish catchers were overjoyed.

A gourd float is a primitive but handy tool.

Unfortunately, the thrilling event has gone forever, enjoyed only in people's memories.

Note: Unless you grew up on the Yellow River, you are not encouraged to swim in it. You should take great caution even when you stand on its banks, as it is possible to get stuck and sink into the loose sand and mud. Hence the saying, "The Yellow River is bottomless."

Experienced fish-catcher — no fish can slip away from such an expert.

THE MOSUO PRESERVED PORK

Photos and article by Song Ming

Preserved fat pork is a delicacy of the Mosuo, an ethnic group of China who lives beside Lugu Lake in Southwest China's Yunnan Province. Between the late tenth and early eleventh lunar months, they make this special kind of pork.

Legend says there were once two brothers in a Mosuo family. Their parents had arranged the division of the family property and asked their elder son to move out and live independently. Before he left, they gave him a pig and a dog. When winter came, he killed the pig in tribute to the Goddess of Mercy. He took out the animal's intestines and organs, cut up the lean meat, removed all the bones, and sewed up the pig's abdomen. After drying in the sun, the carcass became preserved fat pork. He laid the preserved pig on the altar until the last day of the lunar year. After using the pig's head as a sacrifice to the Goddess of Mercy on the second day of the lunar New Year, he gave part of the fat pork to his parents as a gift.

The Mosuo people observe this tradition of killing their pigs and preparing the pork in winter. They choose a lucky day from their own calendar. Usually, this is the first day of the eleventh month. However, Mosuo tradition assigns one of the twelve zodiac animals to each day of the year in the Chinese lunar calendar, and the killing day must not be a day of the Pig, Rat, Goat, Snake, Monkey, Dog or Rooster. If the first day of the eleventh month happens to be such a day, the killing must be postponed. Furthermore, if the previous day, the 30th of the tenth month, is a day of the Pig, the killing has to be moved to the 29th day, a day of the Dog.

The making of preserved fat pork involves the following steps: kill and clean the pig; remove the bones and lean meat; season the carcass; sew up the pig's abdomen; flatten the carcass; dry in the sun; and, finally store the preserved pig. The seasonings are common ones such as salt, Chinese pepper, garlic and ginger, though sometimes butter and honey are added. Then, the pig's abdomen is sewn up with a thick needle and rope. The prepared pigs are then dried in the sun. Preserved pigs are usually piled on an altar or behind the cooking stove.

There are many ways to eat preserved fat pork, such as steamed or fried. Though it looks oily, it is actually very tasty. Apart from being offered to guests, preserved pork also appears during worship ceremonies, funerals and celebrations.

Storage time differs for every preserved pig. I once visited a Mosuo family whose preserved pig had been stored for eight years; it was still edible. With the cool, dry weather of the highland lake region and the Mosuos' expertise, preserved fat pork can be well kept for a long time.

Translated by Kristy Wong

1. Before removing their bones and lean meat, the pigs should be cleaned thoroughly.
2. A Mosuo man sewing up a pig's abdomen.
3. Preserved pigs are a Mosuo symbol of wealth.
4. Delicious preserved fat pork is not greasy at all.

Visiting the Tajiks in China's Northwest

Photos & article by Gu Bingshu

I had longed to see the mysterious Pamirs ever since I saw the film *Guests to the Icy Mountain* decades ago. Recently I finally visited the Pamirs with a friend who is a painter. In the height of summer, we arrived at the Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County in Northwest China's Xinjiang, the westernmost county of the country. The sky was perfectly blue and the clouds pure white. The snow-covered plateau stretched as far as the eye could see.

For generations, the Tajiks have lived on the Roof of the World, a homeland higher than that of any of the other 55 ethnic groups in China. Although their population is barely over 30,000, they have retained their unique customs and lifestyle.

The local people told us that the word "Tajik" originally meant "crown", a beautiful name! According to legend, the chieftain of the ancient tribe had a gorgeous hat, which his people adored. They deemed it a great honour to have a similar hat and even named their tribe after it. A Tajik woman's hat is called *kuleta*, shaped like a basket with a round top. The white brim is embroidered with exquisite black and red designs. Traditionally, Tajik girls learn to embroider the *kuleta* from childhood, to ensure they will marry a good husband.

Tajik men usually wear a high, round hat made of black lambskin and embroidered with red and blue designs. In summer, they wear a little round embroidered cap called *xieyida*.

In the village of Taheman, we found the local customs very peculiar. Firstly, people kiss each other in greeting. When two men meet, they shake hands first, and then still clasping hands, they kiss the back of each other's hand simultaneously. Women kiss each other's cheeks. Close relatives kiss on the lips. When people of different generations meet, the younger kisses the elder's palm. When a man and woman of the same generation meet, the woman kisses the man's hand and the man touches the woman's head. When good friends or close relatives meet after a long separation, they embrace.

The Tajiks have a good tradition of respecting women, observing the rule of ladies and the elderly first. Women always have the best seats at table and the eldest woman, the seat of honour. When everyone is seated, the milky tea and meat are first presented to the eldest woman guest. In the local mosque, Jiamatihana, there are special rooms for women worshippers.

I had long heard of the magic eagle flute of the Tajiks. Apparently they are very rare these days. On the third day in Dabudar, we happened to meet someone working at the township military office, who turned out to be a flute player. On a stretch of meadow, he and his friend, who was an expert of tabor, played some folk melodies. My painter friend recorded the whole performance in excitement. The eagle flute is the most representative musical instrument of the Tajiks. Made from the bones of an eagle's wing, it measures about 20 cm long and is hollow with three holes at the lower part. It is played vertically, without a mouthpiece. Its reedy, high-pitched tones sound like an eagle crying in the distance.

Furthermore, the archetypal dance of the Tajiks, the Eagle Dance, imitates an eagles' flight, very robust and vigorous. There are also many folk tales about eagles. In these mystical legends, eagles symbolise courage, justice, loyalty and honesty. The Tajiks have a special relationship with the eagle, which is the totem of their nationality. The pervasive eagle culture could be felt everywhere.

The Tajiks do not lock their doors. People seem so honest that no one would even pocket things accidentally dropped by others. If someone finds anything, valuable or not, lying in the road, he flags it with a small stone where it waits untouched until its owner retrieves it. The nice felt hat with a stone atop that we had seen one morning was still there when we passed by again that afternoon.

The custom of raising big families is still practised there. As married brothers remain living together, every family is large. Accordingly, each house is like a labyrinth, with one suite opening off another and a skylight in the middle letting light come in and smoke drift out. The Tajiks never accept payment for helping others either. Hospitable in the extreme, they do not hesitate to provide lodging to strangers.

Translated by Yu Ling

Autumn Scenes of Miyaluo

Photos & article by Sam Chiu

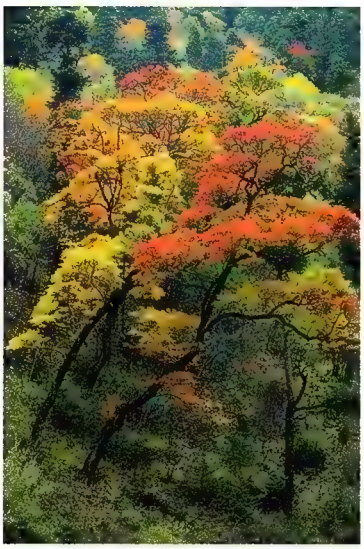
In late October last year, during the break for a job transfer, I spent two weeks visiting Sichuan to photograph beautiful autumnal scenes in Jiuzhaigou, Huanglong, Miyaluo and Taoping. It was my second visit to Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong, two famous scenic spots widely covered by the media and tourism magazines. Miyaluo was not as popular, but I found it ideal for DIY travellers and photography enthusiasts.

About two years ago, I was drawn to a photo published in *China Tourism*. The picture showed a mountain cloaked in red leaves, its backdrop, the blue sky and floating clouds. This paradise on earth is Miyaluo. I knew at first sight that I must visit this charming place!

Few people in Hong Kong know of Miyaluo. When I told a former colleague I was going there, he mistook me to say I was going to Russia. Miyaluo is located on a highland 2,000-3,000 metres above sea level in Lixian County, Sichuan Province. It is the largest scenic area for viewing autumn leaves in the mainland of China. Fragrant Hill in Beijing is famous for similar scenery, but is much smaller compared to Miyaluo. Every October and November, the beautiful scenes of Miyaluo attract photography fans from all parts of the country.

One can reach Miyaluo by taking a scheduled bus from Wenchuan in Sichuan. The journey, via Lixian, takes four and a half hours and costs 20 yuan. The town of Miyaluo is small, but its red-leaf scenic area on the banks of the Gu'nao River extends for dozens of kilometres. Though most of its residents are Tibetan, they have adopted the Han Chinese culture. Outside of town, however, traditional Tibetan customs have been preserved. For accommodation, there is a newly-built, multi-storey hotel on the outskirts of town. The only state-owned hotel downtown charges 380 yuan for a twin room, but discounts of up to 50 percent may be negotiated. There are hostels and family inns too, costing several dozen yuan for a room and public bath. Several restaurants are available. In one, you can have a whole roasted lamb for 400 yuan, with complimentary, family-made qingke wine and a performance of Tibetan songs and dances.

Due to the high altitude, Miyaluo has a dramatically changing climate and a high moisture content. During a storm on the second day, I passed time chatting about hiring vehicles with a friend I had made along the way. Minibuses could be rented, roomy enough for a few visitors like us. However, we planned to hire a truck used for transporting yaks. While the women sat in the driver's cab, we men standing in the open truck could enjoy a 360-degree, panoramic view of the landscape of autumn leaves. We found one for 200 yuan for the afternoon. Driving along the Gu'nao River, we saw magnificent scenery. The leaves of the trees displayed a splendid spectrum of reds, oranges, yellows, and purples. When we found a favoured spot for photo taking, we knocked on the roof of the cab and the driver stopped for us. After 5 p.m., the temperature dropped to only a few degrees above 0°C. We began our return journey, driving against the cold wind in a drizzle. The Tibetans we met on the way all waved to us.



The third day, we went to Zhegu (Partridge) Mountain to enjoy snow views. Partridge Mountain is 4,200 metres above sea level and it takes about two hours to reach the top from Miyaluo Town. Taking into consideration the high altitude and cold weather, we hired a minibus this time for 180 yuan. When we arrived at the foot of the mountain, the sun was hidden in clouds and it was very cold. Rime had formed on branches and the fir trees were clothed in snow, but it was a grey, bleak world. Driving higher up the mountain, we finally reached the peak above the clouds. There, the sky was blue and the snow was pure white. The heavy blanket of clouds we had seen from blow became a billowy sea. Partridge Mountain revealed yet another charming feature of Miyaluo.

We stayed the night at Gurgou, famous for its hot springs. We had planned to go on to Bipeng Gully whose natural features appear in many promotional publications on Miyaluo, but had to give up because the road had been blocked during some road construction.

I must mention another enjoyable part of my journey to Miyaluo — I met and made friends with Little Wu from Chengdu, Old Peng from Guangzhou and Mr. Deng and his wife.

PHOTOGRAPHING MARKETS: HOW TO CONTROL VISUAL CHAOS

Photos & article by Robert Jerome

Robert Jerome is a native New York photographer who has travelled extensively. In his 25-year career, he has visited over 60 countries. Religious ceremonies and other aspects of local life with a strong ethnic flavour are his favourite subjects. He shares some of his photography tips below.

A good way to experience a foreign culture first-hand is to visit a native market. Not only do markets offer local handicrafts at prices lower than those in tourist shops, markets are also ripe with photographic opportunities. As opposed to standard tourist stops, markets allow you to photograph people in native dress engaged in everyday activities, which are often more powerful representations of a country's spirit than sites listed in any guidebook.

TIP 1

Stroll around the market before photographing it, especially in places where people are unused to foreign visitors. If you begin shooting immediately, people may either shy away from your camera or stand rigid in frozen poses. If you walk around the market first, you will not only get an idea of which areas present the best photographic opportunities, but also people will become accustomed to your presence and more amenable to being photographed.

TIP 2

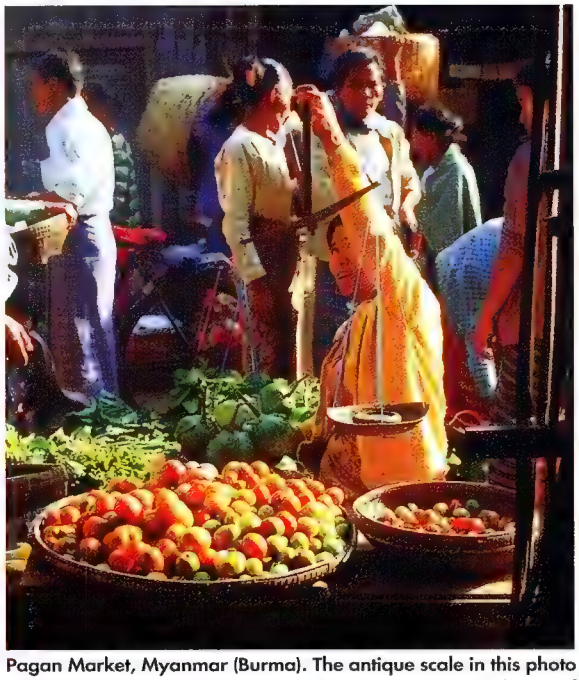
Move in close to your subject. Many photographers tend to stand too far from their subjects. In market photographs, this can result in overly wide shots that include telephone lines, people in Western clothing mingled with more authentically dressed people, and even plastic bags or other rubbish on the edges of shots. One of the best ways to control the chaos is to move close to the subject to eliminate distracting elements.

TIP 3

Avoid candid shots. Through a nod or a few words in the native language, gain assent before taking pictures of anyone. Don't attempt to hide the fact that you are photographing them. Photographing people without their knowledge is not only rude, in some countries it can be misinterpreted as suspicious behaviour and can actually put you in jeopardy.

Sunday Market, Thimpu, Bhutan. The bargaining in this picture creates a stronger sense of market life than if the photo's subjects were simply smiling at the camera.

A market in Ubud, Bali. The repeating circular shapes of the baskets create an interesting graphic design.



Pagan Market, Myanmar (Burma). The antique scale in this photo is something few of us see in more developed countries. The act of weighing something on the scale captures the essence of this Burmese market.

Tip 4

Photograph people engaged in activities or interacting with others. Often, people being photographed smile and look directly at the camera, but the most compelling market shots capture people going about their daily routines, exchanging goods for money, displaying their products or chatting with one another. These shots distil a defining essence of the culture. In busy markets, look for interactions among two or three people and use the rest of the crowd as a background to highlight your subjects.

Tip 5

Shoot of the wares alone. Sometimes what is for sale in a market is as interesting as the people there. Close-ups of exotic fruits and vegetables or handicrafts that you might never see in your own country make excellent souvenirs.

Tip 6

Identify and incorporate graphic designs. A creative way to reign in market chaos is to search out interesting shapes and patterns that complement the subject of a photograph. Subject matter that contains circles, triangles, strong diagonal lines or repeating patterns can result in photographs that not only evoke an area's culture but are visually stunning as well.

Oaxaca Market, Mexico. Two views of the same subject: "pan de muerto", or "bread of the dead", which natives take to graveyards during Day of the Dead ceremonies on November 1st. The shot of the boy surrounded by bread gives a sense of the size of the loaves, while the close-up reveals details not clearly visible in the wider shot.

Sacks of grain and other commodities form a pleasing pattern.

Urbanisation of Ecological Attractions

Article by Feng Yanjun

In recent years China's ecotourism has grown rapidly to play an important role in the development of the tourism and service industries, the exploitation and utilisation of ecological resources, and the promotion of tourist areas. Its merits cannot be ignored.

However, in the midst of the tourism craze, the urbanisation of ecological attractions has become more and more serious. Many once naturally beautiful places have changed beyond recognition. Random tree felling and the building of roads and cableways in scenic areas without careful planning are common occurrences; the indigenous vegetation of many scenic areas has been seriously damaged or destroyed, leaving nothing but loose dirt which lorries speeding past churn up into clouds of dust; and, in some places modern buildings are constructed on virgin land, arousing the heated criticism of many conservationists and ecological specialists. Furthermore, businessmen, hoping to take advantage of tourism, set up hotels, tea houses, department stores, noisy markets and recreational venues which are quite out of tune with the peaceful, natural environment.

While it is true that construction of roads, houses, cableways, shops and other amenities in scenic areas has made travelling more convenient and helped increase the locals' incomes, the destruction wreaked on the primitive, natural sites has been enormous and shocking. Still worse, in one scenic area, several thousand square metres of primeval forest were felled in order to build a cableway. This has led to so much change in the microclimate that the mountains, which were perennially covered with snow in the past, have no snow in summer and autumn anymore.

Environmentalists hold that ecological resources such as plains, lakes, wetlands, islands, forests, deserts, valleys, etc., are like cultural relics, which are easily marred. If they are damaged or destroyed, they may never rise again. We should recognise that ecotourism demands "idyllic appeal" rather than "workmanship"; it offers tranquil valleys rather than busy streets. The blind, wanton exploration of ecological attractions will end with streams and rivers drying up, wild animals running away, and beautiful landscapes disappearing. And this is a serious crime against nature.

The purpose of ecotourism is to lead people into nature's calm and beauty so that they can relax and free themselves from all worries. While building up their physical strength and mental willpower, they increase their knowledge of nature and ecology. We must appreciate the precious treasure nature has bestowed on all of us and we should protect it and explore it in an orderly and considerate manner. Only in this way, can we safeguard the ecological environment, and at the same time, safeguard ourselves and our descendants.

The Trip on which I Made the Most Friends

Article by Shasha

Among the many tours I have made in the past years, I believe the one to Xishuangbanna in April 1995 was the most unforgettable because during the short Water-Splashing Festival there, I made more friends than ever before. Worried that it might be too difficult to find a hotel at festival time, many people like me got to Jinghong early and paid for the first 10 days' stay in advance before having a look around.

On the way to Jinghong, I became acquainted with Brother Wang and Brother Lu from Taiwan on the long distance bus. The two of them had got to know each other on the trip, too. They went on to Ganlanba while my friend and I stayed in Jinghong. That evening we met an aircraft-maintenance engineer who took us to dinner. On the second and third days, the three of us visited the small town of Daluo near the Myanmar border. Going back to Jinghong, I got to know Tall Gao, a cook from Hong Kong who was very eloquent and willing to help others. Next I came across Ah Rong, a bashful computer science engineer. Meanwhile, I also met Victeur, a mechanic engineer from Switzerland, and Caroline from England. We all stayed in the same small hotel, walked in and out together and dined at the same table. The next two people I became acquainted with were Ah Xia and Ah Li, also from Hong Kong. They had gotten to know each other on the plane flying from Guangzhou to Jinghong.

On the first day of the Water-Splashing Festival, the whole international group of us rushed to the Lancang River bank to watch the dragon boat race and look at the sand sculptures. We then gathered at noon to have lunch. That evening, when the large bonfire party and the releasing of the Kong Ming Lanterns began, I made another new friend, Xiao Mao from Shanghai, who looked Japanese to me.

On the second day of the festival, I got acquainted with Alan who had come alone from Hong Kong. As there were too many programmes for us to enjoy that day, each of us went our separate ways.

The third day of the festival began with the main programme — water splashing. It started at nine in the morning and ended at noon. Everyone did their level best and everyone, especially we girls, got soaked to the skin like drenched chickens. In the afternoon, all the visitors hastened to catch the long-distance bus to Kunming, where some would continue their journeys while several friends from Hong Kong, Xiao Mao and myself agreed to lodge in the Kunhu Hotel.

After the Hong Kong friends left for home, Xiao Mao and I remained in Kunming to continue our holiday. He took me to sojourn in his relative's home and invited me to visit him if I ever got to Shanghai. I was later transferred to work there and had many more opportunities to meet up with Xiao Mao; he is my husband now.

CORRECTION: The author of "Stones in the Wind" on page 81, Issue No.259 should be Li Jin. We are sorry for the mistake.

Mishap on a Snow Mountain in Lebanon

Article by Rong Shunqing

Last summer several friends and I joined a tour to Lebanon. On the way we decided to take a trip to see the firs on a snow mountain famous for such trees. To do this safely, it is necessary to hire a four-wheel-drive vehicle to tackle the treacherous roads. Not knowing this at the time, we chose a tourist bus instead. Eventually the bus got stuck in deep snow and we were stranded on the mountainside.

As it was getting dark and snow was beginning to fall, we were all frightened. Our local guide immediately used his mobile phone to call the police for help. About 15 minutes later, the local police arrived in a jeep to retrieve us. They tried to tow our bus down the mountain with their jeep but failed because the bus was too heavy. Finally they asked the army to come to the rescue. We women tourists were taken to the police station at the foot of the mountain for a rest first, while the men waited on the mountain.

Once we reached the station, the policemen quickly presented us with hot tea and put more wood into the stove. As the building warmed up, the snow on the roof melted and toppled down to block half of the gate. To ensure our safety, the police quickly transferred us to a nearby restaurant via their police van. The owner of the restaurant was again very hospitable. He offered us some steaming food but refused to charge us, for which we, a group of strangers from a faraway country, were very grateful.

Three hours later, through the joint efforts of the local police and the army, the tourist bus was freed and the other visitors were escorted down the mountain. During the entire rescue, the local police, soldiers and others showed great friendship, sincerity and a willingness to help. All of us were moved deeply. It was an unforgettable part of our tour.

A Dangerous Acquaintance

Article by Dayi

During my trip to the hinterland last year, through a friend, I met a 40-year-old man who worked in a cultural unit. He had a gentle, polite manner and appeared to be trustworthy. Because he had been introduced to me by a friend and he took his wife to have dinner with me that night, he won my trust and we were soon on friendly terms. When the man volunteered to be my guide, I agreed readily.

Early the next morning he picked me up with a motorcycle and we left to visit the mountains. The scenery along the way was very beautiful. As we rushed forward into the wind, we talked happily as if we were two children. After riding hard all day, we reached a mountain village before dusk. We decided to stay the night in the village. After supper, as it was still not dark, we took a walk in the nearby area. The mountain path zigzagged and we chatted as we hiked. When it got dark, a hazy moon rose in the misty sky. I did not know whether it was because of the enchanting moon or something else, but he suddenly came to a halt, turned to me and said in an agitated voice, "I don't know why, but we were like old friends at our first meeting. Let's shake hands and be good friends." Seeing the innocent look on his face, I reached out my hand without the slightest hesitation. However, when my hand touched his, he grasped it tightly for a long time and would not let go. My intuition immediately kicked in and I threw off his grip, saying, "I'm sorry, I don't like that." But he quickly grabbed my other wrist and muttered: "You are very beautiful in the moonlight...." All of a sudden, a cold wave surged through my heart. I tried to free my hand, saying sternly, "If you behave like this, I'll go back right away!" The frightful grip loosened slowly. But soon he turned his face to me and said, "Let's dance together. OK?" I nearly collapsed.

My mind was in turmoil: Should I slap him and then leave in a huff, or should I stay to see what he is planning and then report him when we return to the village? But I am a stranger here; who will believe what I say without evidence? If he becomes desperate, Heaven knows what this hypocrite will do! Moreover, this is such a remote mountain area that I don't know where we are and how I can find my way back. I tried to relax and told him calmly: "I can't dance, and I don't want to learn. As it's so late, all I want is to go back to the village!" Seeing that I was firm and stern, he agreed to turn back.

Fortunately, on the way back, he did not commit any further indiscretions, but instead began telling me sullenly about his various misfortunes concerning his family and career.... I did not know whether he was creating an excuse for his behaviour or telling the truth about his "middle-life crisis", but looking at him, I felt he was both pitiful and hateful. I swore to myself that I mustn't lower my guard on future trips.

Chance Meetings: Coincidence or Fate?

Article by Wang Qian

After travelling along the north and south of Ngari, our group returned to Lhasa, but I decided to use the last few days of my leave to travel in Shannan, the birthplace of Tibetan culture. In Samye Monastery, I met Yuze, a man from Qamdo, who was standing before the Prayer Corridor of the Wuce Hall. Dressed in red and yellow Tibetan clothing with a felt hat on his head, he certainly caught the eye. We felt like old friends from the start and happily spent the afternoon together at the monastery. At dusk, after shaking Yuze's hand in farewell and with a melancholy feeling, I hastened to board the last ferry, believing I would never meet him again, because we had not exchanged addresses.

At noon on the third day I took a bus back to Lhasa after visiting Zêtang County. When we took on more passengers in front of Samye Monastery, Yuze boarded and so we met again. What a surprise! On the bus, Yuze began to sing Tibetan folk songs. Other Tibetan young people joined him in chorus. At the Lhasa Bus Station I said goodbye to Yuze once again. That same evening I was surprised to see his tall figure walking towards me for the third time in the crowds on Barkhor Street in Lhasa.

Yuze and I sat by the fountain pond at Lhasa Square for a long time. In the drizzly night, Potala Palace looked exceptionally gentle and quiet. But when I remembered that I would leave Lhasa and fly south early next morning, I felt distracted and at a loss. My 28-day visit to this pure land surged like waves in my mind and, without realisation, I had fallen deeply in love with the land and the people here....

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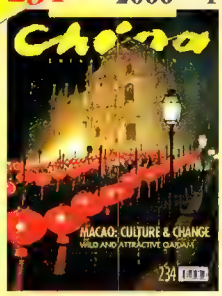

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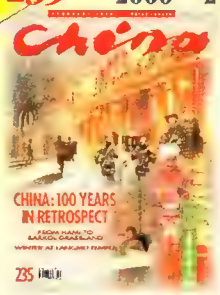

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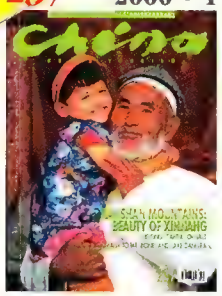

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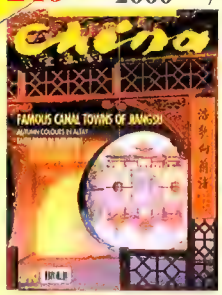

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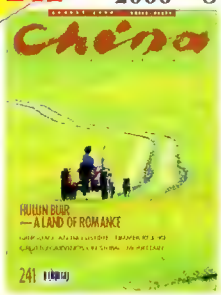

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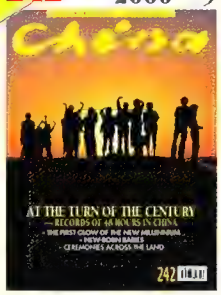

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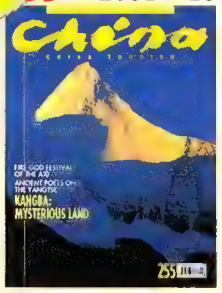

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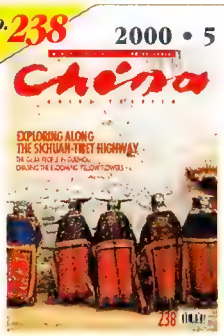

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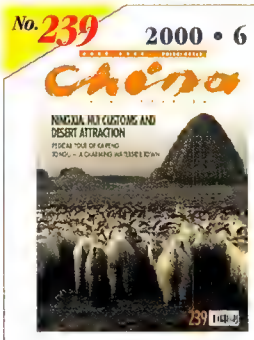

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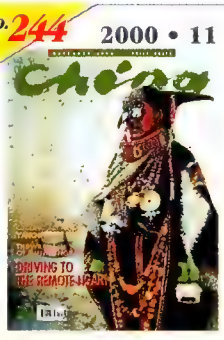

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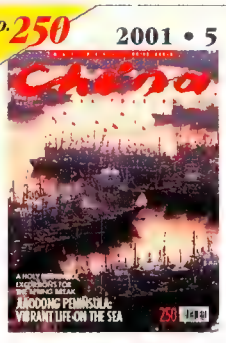

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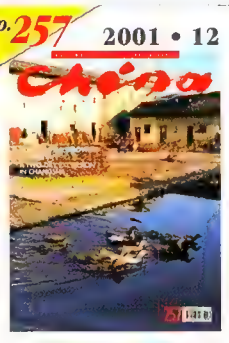

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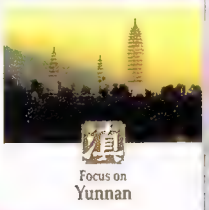

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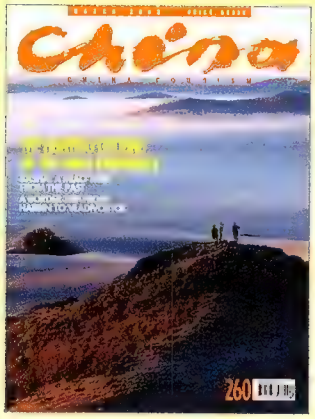

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Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

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A Day in Beijing: In Photos and Words	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
My Feelings for the Axu Grassland	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Others: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
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	The Palace Hotel	*****	8 Goldfish Lane, Wangfujing, Beijing	(10) 65128899	(10) 65127118
	Kempinski Hotel Lufthansa Center	*****	50 Liangmaqiao Rd, Beijing	(10) 64653388	(10) 64653366
	Grand Hotel	*****	35 Chang'an Boulevard E, Beijing	(10) 65130062	(10) 65130049
	Great Wall Sheraton Hotel	*****	10 East 3rd Ring Rd N, Beijing	(10) 65905566	(10) 65905398
	Capital Hotel	****	3 Qianmen St E, Beijing	(10) 65129988	(10) 65120321
	Tianlun Dynasty Hotel	****	50 Wangfujing St, Beijing	(10) 65138888	(10) 65137818
	Novotel Peace Hotel	****	3 Goldfish Lane, Wangfujing, Beijing	(10) 65128833	(10) 65126863
	International Hotel	****	9 Jianguomennei St, Beijing	(10) 65126688	(10) 65129961
	Gloria Plaza Hotel	****	2 Jianguomennan St, Beijing	(10) 65158855	(10) 65158533
	Songhe Hotel	***	88 Dengshikou St, Beijing	(10) 65138822	(10) 65139088
	Taiwan Hotel	***	5-15 Goldfish Lane, Wangfujing, Beijing	(10) 65136688	(10) 65136896
	Qianmen Hotel	***	175 Yong'an Rd, Beijing	(10) 63016688	(10) 63013883
	Minzu Hotel	***	51 Fuxingmennei St, Beijing	(10) 66014466	(10) 66014849
	Yuexiu Hotel	***	24 Xuanwumen St E, Beijing	(10) 63014499	(10) 63014609
Tianjin	Sheraton Tianjin Hotel	*****	Zijinshan Rd, Tianjin	(22) 23343388	(22) 23358740
	Astor Hotel	****	33 Tai'erzhuang Rd, Tianjin	(22) 23320185	(22) 23321128
	Crystal Palace Hotel	****	28 Youyi Rd, Tianjin	(22) 28356666	(22) 28358886
	Hyatt Tianjin	****	219 Jiefang Rd N, Tianjin	(22) 23318888	(22) 23310021
	Holiday Inn Hotel	****	288 Zhongshan Rd, Tianjin	(22) 26286868	(22) 26286666
	Geneva Hotel	****	32 Youyi Rd, Tianjin	(22) 28352222	(22) 28359855
	Taida Int'l Hotel Tianjin	****	8 Second St, Developing Area, Tianjin	(22) 25325856	(22) 25326490
	Friendship Hotel	***	94 Nanjing Rd, Tianjin	(22) 23315603	(22) 23310616
	Gainhill Int'l Hotel	***	2 Sanma Rd, Tianjin	(22) 27353143	(22) 27353147
	Caesar Palace Hotel	***	4 Qixiangtai Rd S, Tianjin	(22) 22311717	(22) 23374922
	East Asia Hotel	***	41 Hanyang Rd, Tianjin	(22) 27838888	(22) 27832929
	Tianjin Grand Hotel	***	Youyi Rd, Tianjin	(22) 28359000	(22) 28359822

Flights to and from **Beijing**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Bangkok — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0130	0655	CA 980
Beijing — Bangkok	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2035	0020	CA 979
Chengdu — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0900	1110	SZ4101
Beijing — Chengdu	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1035	1305	CA1415
Hanoi — Beijing	2 5	0840	1420	CZ 362
Beijing — Hanoi	1 4	1550	1950	CZ 361
Hong Kong — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0930	1220	CA 108
Beijing — Hong Kong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1000	1315	CA 111
Kunming — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0805	1105	3Q4121
Beijing — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1200	1505	3Q4122
London — Beijing	6	1915	1325	CA 938
	2 4 7	1925	1325	CA 938
Beijing — London	2 4 6 7	1405	1650	CA 937
Madrid — Beijing	3 7	1200	0900	MU 552
Beijing — Madrid	2 6	1220	2025	MU 551
Manila — Beijing	1 2 3 5 6	0900	1630	CZ 378
Beijing — Manila	1 2 4 5 7	1300	1955	CZ 377
Moscow — Beijing	1 2 4 5	2040	0940	CA 910
Beijing — Moscow	1 2 4 5	1550	1935	CA 909
Munich — Beijing	5 7	1755	1025	MU 558
Beijing — Munich	5 7	1220	1550	MU 557
New York — Beijing	5 7	0500	1500	CA9016
	3	2000	0430	CA9010
	2	2230	0830	CA9016
	2 4 6	2305	0635	MU5788
Beijing — New York	3	1245	1700	CA9009
	7	1500	1730	CA9009
	5	1710	1930	CA9005
	2	1710	2030	CA9015
	4 6	2330	0300	CA9015
Paris — Beijing	1 4 6	0400	2110	MU5794
	7	1225	0600	MU 560
	7	1745	1040	CA 934
	1 2 5	1800	1040	CA 934
Beijing — Paris	1 2 5 7	1150	1600	CA 933
	3 5 7	2210	0200	MU5793
Rome — Beijing	1 3 6	1720	1020	CA 940
Beijing — Rome	1 3 6	0915	1525	CA 939
Incheon — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0940	1105	CA 138
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1315	1415	CA 124
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1820	1920	CA 126
Beijing — Incheon	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0900	1150	CA 123
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1400	1700	CA 125
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1810	2110	CA 137
Shanghai — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	1030	CA1590
Beijing — Shanghai	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	1020	CA 929
Singapore — Beijing	1 3 5 6	0010	0640	CA 976
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0020	0630	CZ 356
	2 3 4 5 6 7	0930	1740	CA 958

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Singapore	1 2 3 4 5 6	1220	2025	CA 957
	2 4 5 7	1550	2235	CA 975
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2340	0540	CZ355
Sydney — Beijing	4 5 7	1120	2305	CA 176
	2 6	1120	2320	CA 173
	1 3 6	1125	2255	MU 562
Beijing — Sydney	2 5 7	1745	0930	MU 561
	3 4 6	1820	0920	CA 175
Tokyo — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1350	1910	MU 524
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1455	1745	CA 926
	1 4 7	1655	2130	CA 952
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1700	2210	CA 930
Beijing — Tokyo	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	1520	CA 929
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0925	1350	CA 925
	1 4 7	0930	1540	CA 951
Vancouver — Beijing	1 3 5	1200	1515	CA 992
	1 5	1350	1650	CA 992
Beijing — Vancouver	1 3 5	1500	0930	CA 991
	1 5	1730	1200	CA 991

Flights to and from **Tianjin**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Chengdu — Tianjin	2 4 6	0840	1050	3U 117
	1 4 6	1250	1645	CA1422
	3	1455	1830	CA1422
	2 7	1800	2130	XW 238
Tianjin — Chengdu	1 4 6	0820	1145	CA1421
	3	1010	1410	CA1421
	2 4 6	1130	1410	3U 118
	2 7	1320	1655	XW 237
Fuzhou — Tianjin	2 4 6	1050	1300	HU 525
	1 5	1450	1810	MF8117
	4 7	1940	2200	CA1526
Tianjin — Fuzhou	2 4 6	1340	1605	HU 526
	4 7	1625	1900	CA1525
	1 5	1850	2220	MF8118
Guilin — Tianjin	2 5	1325	1750	CA1532
Tianjin — Guilin	2 5	0810	1245	CA1531
Hong Kong — Tianjin	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1235	1535	CA 104
Tianjin — Hong Kong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0835	1135	CA 103
Nagoya — Tianjin	1 3 5	1440	1640	CA 158
Tianjin — Nagoya	1 3 5	1000	1340	CA 157
Nanjing — Tianjin	2 5	1610	1750	CA1532
Tianjin — Nanjing	2 5	0810	0955	CA1531

** For reference only.*

Airline codes:

CA = Air China
CZ = China Southern Airlines
MF = Xiamen Airlines Co Ltd
MU = China Eastern Airlines
SZ = China Southwest Airlines
XW = China Xinhua Airlines
3Q = Yunnan Airlines
3U = Sichuan Airlines

- The **Tibet Autonomous Region**, the area described as the "last unpolluted land in the world", is the ultimate, dream destination for lots of travellers. Last year, a 60-year-old Japanese man who has devoted half his life to studying Chinese culture, toured to Tibet despite many possible obstacles such as high expense, old age, bad weather and an arduous route. He invited our reporter to travel to the Roof of the World with him by way of the Yunnan-Tibet Highway, the least developed among the four highways connecting Tibet to the rest of China (the other three being the Qinghai-Tibet, Sichuan-Tibet and Xinjiang-Tibet highways). Regardless of the aforementioned difficulties, the 35-day trip has proved it is no easy task driving to Tibet, in spite of seeing as much beautiful scenery as possible on the way. The reporter shares with you this adventurous trip in the next "Feature Story".

- **Daxin County** in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is renowned for its picturesque scenery. During a four-day trip to this county, which marks the boundary between China and Vietnam, our reporter visited the spectacular cross-border Detian Waterfall. Over 100 metres wide, the waterfall is divided into numerous cascades which feed in from the north, east and west to form a U-shaped trough. Among the fantastic experiences, tourists can look out on nature from the windows of their rooms in a hotel situated right inside the scenic area. Daxin is a paradise of tranquillity and natural wonders for city-dwellers.

- Perhaps the phrase "no sacred mountain is worth seeing after a trip to **Mount Huangshan**" alone tells you all you need to know about the beauty of Mount Huangshan, situated in East China's Anhui Province. Since becoming known the world over, this world natural heritage site has drawn numerous tourists annually from home and abroad, including the writer of next month's "Traveller's Corner". Admiring the peculiar, captivating golden leaves and the pure snow piled up on the tree branches there, he went twice to Mount Huangshan, in autumn and winter, respectively. Happily, he was rewarded with unique feelings and charming photos which may also present a clearer picture of the mountain to readers.

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圖傳/Fax:(86-755)2226719
電子信箱/E-mail:rez@sunshinehotel.com
國際互聯網絡: http://www.sunshinehotel.com

香港辦事處: 香港灣仔洛克道353號三湘大廈35樓
35/F,Sunshine Plaza,353 Lockhart Road,Wanchai, Hong Kong.
電話/Tel:(852)2575 5989 傳真/Fax:(852)2803 4311
電子信箱/E-mail:ciemgt@netvigator.com

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JIN JIANG HOTEL

where Shanghai past and future are ever present.

At the heart of Shanghai, sits the stately Jin Jiang Hotel. Here, venerable European buildings surround a lush, wooded garden, and house some of the most modern facilities available in Shanghai. The hotel is proud to have received about 300 state leaders and government heads since its opening. Its incomparably attentive service has won high praise from guests from both home and abroad. The Cathay Building of Jin Jiang Hotel which was built in 1929, integrates the traditional classic Gothic style. In 1999, the Cathay Building was renovated into a five-star hotel. It takes on once again an elegant look and combines the traditional classic style with up-to-date facilities.

Jin Jiang Grand Hall witnessed numerous historic events including the signing of the "Sino-American Joint Communique" in Feb. 1972. After rebuilding, the new Jin Jiang Grand Hall is ready to provide simply the best service and hospitality with the state-of-the-art facilities.

Jin Jiang's food has a history dating back to the 1930's and its Sichuan and Cantonese cuisine has become perfected after more than a half-century of experience.

70 years later, Jin Jiang Hotel — where Shanghai's past and future are ever present.

锦江饭店

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Add: 59 Mao Ming Road (S) Shanghai China
Tel: (86) 21-62582582 62534242
Fax: (86) 21-64725588
Post Code: 200020
Website: http://www.jinjianghotelshanghai.com
E-mail: jinjiang@public2.sta.net.cn